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# Critical Pragmatism: Peirce and Marcuse on the Socio-Political Influences on Human Development in Advanced Industrial Societies

Clancy Smith

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CRITICAL PRAGMATISM:  
PEIRCE AND MARCUSE ON THE SOCIO-POLITICAL INFLUENCES ON HUMAN  
DEVELOPMENT IN ADVANCED INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Clancy Smith

May 2016

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Clancy Smith

2015

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Approved June 8, 2015

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# ABSTRACT

## CRITICAL PRAGMATISM:

### PEIRCE AND MARCUSE ON THE SOCIO-POLITICAL INFLUENCES ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN ADVANCED INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES

By

Clancy Smith

May 2016

Dissertation supervised by Dr. James Swindal, Ph.D.

My dissertation brings together representatives from two otherwise antagonistic traditions: Charles Peirce of the pragmatists and Herbert Marcuse of the critical theorists. I demonstrate the affinities between the two philosophers with a focus on their contributions to socio-political thought in advanced industrial societies. After addressing the antagonisms between the two traditions I offer a reading that allows for a Peircean complement to Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* and a Marcusean complement to Peirce's critique of the "method of authority" in his seminal essay, "The Fixation of Belief."

## DEDICATION

To my parents, Braden and Susan, who would have loved to have seen the completion of this project.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My most sincere gratitude goes out to Dr. James Swindal for his tireless work supervising this project and my dissertation committee, Dr. George Yancy and Dr. Tom Eysers. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Garry Hagberg of Bard College and Dr. Frank Ryan of Kent State University, and Dr. Mélanie Walton of Belmont University for their endless support and aid throughout this massive project.

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## Introduction

### The Enigma

The story of Charles Sanders Peirce did not end on April 19, 1914, where he lay silently on his deathbed, a book propped open upon his lap, a portrait of his favorite dog Zola on the wall, his adoring (and mysterious) wife Juliette by his side. Throughout his long and tumultuous life, Peirce had always been fascinated by the lives of “great men”<sup>1</sup> and held out hope, to the bitter end, that he’d at last be recognized as the Aristotle or Leibniz that he felt he had become.<sup>2</sup> Crippled by debilitating pain throughout his life,<sup>3</sup> the narcotics he used to ease his suffering,<sup>4</sup> the often-hostile attitude that would emerge during bouts of this ailment,<sup>5</sup> his arrogance, his Dandyism, and his life-long battle with Harvard President Charles Eliot, Peirce failed time and again to attain a permanent academic position and the only position he *did* temporarily achieve<sup>6</sup> ended in obfuscated puritanical hatred borne of Peirce’s dalliance with a mysterious French woman<sup>7</sup> before

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<sup>1</sup> Peirce taught a class at Johns Hopkins on the “psychology of great men” which, as Brent notes, was one of Peirce’s “lifelong interests,” Joseph Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 128.

<sup>2</sup> “The only writers known to me who are in the same rank as I are Aristotle, Duns Scotus, and Leibniz, the three greatest logicians in [my] estimation,” C.S. Peirce, Letter 482, as quoted in Max Fisch, *Peirce, Semeiotic, and Pragmatism: Essays by Max H. Fisch*, edited by Kenneth Laine Ketner and Christian J.W. Kloesel (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 250, and in Joseph Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life, Op. Cit.*, 324. This sentiment was corroborated by Ernst Schröder, one of the greatest German logicians, who claimed that Peirce’s “fame would shine like that of Leibniz or Aristoteles into all the thousands of years to come,” cited in Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life, Op. Cit.*, 256.

<sup>3</sup> Facial neuralgia plagued him off and on throughout his life.

<sup>4</sup> Opiates and cocaine.

<sup>5</sup> Which Peirce kept secret from all but his closest friends making it all the more mysterious for those unfamiliar with his condition when his sudden moodswings would manifest.

<sup>6</sup> A temporary lectureship at Johns Hopkins with John Dewey as his student.

<sup>7</sup> Peirce’s second wife, Juliette.

his first marriage had ended.<sup>8</sup> As he struggled to earn a living with the U.S. Coast Survey, his groundbreaking scientific discoveries in the fields of gravimetrics, pendulum research, and mapping the shape of the Milky Way are only *now* being recognized for the genius those theories contained.<sup>9</sup> Eking out the barest living writing book reviews, contributing to the *Century Dictionary*, publishing what scientific-qua-philosophical articles he could but, mostly, through a fund organized by William James, his family and what few friends he had, Peirce lingered on the edge of starvation and financial oblivion most of his adult life. The despair and keen awareness of a squandered life of potential greatness was ubiquitously apparent in his correspondences to James, Royce and others towards the end of his life until he at last perished, alone save for his ever-devoted wife, amidst the crumbling ruin of what had been intended as a new Academy, “Arisbe,”<sup>10</sup> Peirce’s ill-advised palatial estate in Milford.

“The spectacle of great individuals spurned in their own times and rehabilitated in the next is one of the clichés of history. Each case exhibits an open or suppressed threat to the dominant ideologies of its world.”<sup>11</sup> In Peirce’s case, this was all quite true, cliché

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<sup>8</sup> His first wife, Melusina.

<sup>9</sup> For example, as Popper notes, Peirce’s early scientific discoveries are “clearly compatible with the new quantum theory,” Quoted in Fisch, *Peirce, Semeiotic, and Pragmatism*, *Op. Cit.*, 426. Further, Peirce’s “prescience was point out in 1984, one hundred years after Peirce’s lecture at Johns Hopkins titled ‘Design and Chance,’ by a Nobel Prize-winning chemist and one of the founders of the ‘new physics’ of chaos, Ilya Prigogine, among the few modern theoreticians to have read Peirce. Prigogine showed how Peirce’s view of time and the second law of thermodynamics anticipated the ‘new physics’ which derives order out of chaos by means of the idea that very small, chance differences can quickly create ‘self-organized’ large-scale uniform effects – that the physical world we perceive is characterized by extremely sensitive dependence on initial conditions, a fact which Peirce himself had pointed out,” Brent, *Charles S. Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 175. Prigogine famous noted that “Peirce’s metaphysics was considered as one more example of philosophy alienated from reality...Today, Peirce’s work appears a pioneering step toward understanding the pluralism involved in physical laws,” Ilya Prigigone and Isabelle Stengers, *Order out of Chaos: Man’s New Dialogue with Nature* (New York: Viking Press, 1987), 303.

<sup>10</sup> “My ultimate aim is to set going an institution for the pursuit of pure science & philosophy which shall be self-supporting,” from a letter from Peirce to Francis C. Russell, September 17, 1892, cited in Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 191.

<sup>11</sup> Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 8.

though it may likewise be. That Peirce's contributions to science, logic, and philosophy actively challenged the dominant ideologies of his world is beyond dispute and it wasn't until after his death, thanks in part to his widow's sale of Peirce's manuscripts to Harvard for the paltry sum of \$500, and the quick-thinking of Peirce's lifelong friend Josiah Royce that the rest of his papers and his entire library were handed over to Harvard, that his work would eventually influence a new generation of philosophers. Under the guidance of Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, Peirce's *Collected Papers* were published and now, thanks to the Peirce Edition Project, Indiana University Press is slowly, but surely, publishing the entirety of his work, volume by volume. In the decades after his death, one of the most prestigious philosophical journals, *The Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, rose to prominence and continues to influence the trajectory of pragmatism to this day.

That Peirce has been fundamental in influencing some of the greatest philosophical minds of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries is beyond question, despite the relative obscurity he experienced during his own lifetime. Of course, most immediately, his fellows at Cambridge's "Metaphysical Club," most notably William James and Oliver Wendell Holmes, were influenced by Peirce's groundbreaking contributions to philosophy. Then there was John Dewey and Christine Ladd-Franklin, his students in logic, mathematics and philosophy during his brief time at Johns Hopkins. And beyond that his reach is nearly limitless: Josiah Royce (whom Peirce considered his only true philosophical heir), Umberto Eco (the famed novelist and semeiotician), Gilles Deleuze (the famous French post-modernist), Karl Popper (who called Peirce "one of the greatest

philosophers of all time”<sup>12</sup>), Alfred North Whitehead (who saw Peirce as a modern-day analogue to Aristotle<sup>13</sup>), Ernest Nagel (who said of Peirce’s empiricism, “no account of the development of contemporary empiricism is adequate which neglects the writings and influence of Charles Peirce”<sup>14</sup>), Jürgen Habermas (the most celebrated “second generation” critical theorist out of the Frankfurt School), and Noam Chomsky (who said that “the philosopher to whom I feel closest and whom I’m almost paraphrasing is Charles Sanders Peirce”<sup>15</sup>) to name but a very small few.

Peirce was a man out of place and time and came to loathe the Gilded Age wherein he lived, an “age whose dominant values he despised,”<sup>16</sup> where at every turn his innovations were curbed by the demand for “*results*, tangible to them,”<sup>17</sup> the controllers of the flow of capital. A milieu where science was forced to submit to the thrall of the “holy, holy, holy dollar.”<sup>18</sup> The stagnation of his own career in an age of capital undoubtedly influenced his articulation of capitalism as “The Gospel of Greed,” “the conviction of the nineteenth century...that progress takes place by virtue of every individual’s striving for himself with all his might and trampling his neighbour under foot whenever he gets a chance to do so.”<sup>19</sup> As Anderson rightly notes, Peirce’s critique of the “Gospel of Greed” clearly demonstrated that Peirce “was not an advocate of what seem to

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Fisch, *Peirce, Semeiotic, and Pragmatism*, *Op. Cit.*, 426.

<sup>13</sup> In a letter from Whitehead to Charles Hartshorne, January 2, 1936, cited in Victor Lowe, *Alfred North Whitehead: The Man and His Work*, Vol. 2, ed. J.B. Schneewind (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Hopkins Press, 1990), 345.

<sup>14</sup> Ernest Nagel, “Charles S. Peirce, Pioneer of Modern Empiricism,” *Philosophy of Science* 7, no. 1 (1940): 69–80, 69.

<sup>15</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Language and Responsibility* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 71.

<sup>16</sup> Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Charles S. Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, 8 Volumes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931–1936), CP 1.657. I will use the standard designation “CP” when referring to this collection from here on.

<sup>18</sup> Charles S. Peirce to Thomas Corwin Mendenhall, draft letter, November 18, 1891, cited in Joseph Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 196.

<sup>19</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.294.

many to be the worst demons of American capitalism”<sup>20</sup> wherein “the *summum bonum*,” was “food in plenty” but “food for whom? Why, for the greedy master of intelligence.”<sup>21</sup> Peirce claimed that the “the worst feature of the present state of things is that the great majority of the members of many scientific societies, and a large part of others, are men whose chief interest in science is as a means of gaining money, and who have a contempt, or half-contempt, for pure science.”<sup>22</sup> He found omnipresent “trappings which serve to hide from author and reader alike the ugly nakedness of the greed-god”<sup>23</sup> and that “society could not exist upon a basis of intelligent greed alone.”<sup>24</sup> In an anecdote about “the social atmosphere” in Baltimore, he claimed it contributed to his “prejudice against monsters of iniquity and against men of greed.”<sup>25</sup>

Peirce, raised by his father, Benjamin, the renowned mathematician and Harvard professor, was never disciplined as a child (except where *intellectual* discipline was concerned), encouraged to be hyperbolically independent, creative, imaginative, and rebellious, and grew up to subsequently rebel *against* the milieu of authority and industrial values, save for the very end of his life when the poverty and starvation forged from his losing battle with the establishments of academia forced him to try his hand at every get-rich-quick scheme he could conjure to stave off the gnawing pains in his empty stomach and the declining health of his devoted wife. Perhaps this is why Peirce spent so much time leveling decimating critiques against any authoritarian structure that would alter the trajectory of inquiry, binding the free-spirited scientist to values not of his own

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<sup>20</sup> Douglas R. Anderson, “A Political Dimension of Fixing Belief” in *The Rule of Reason: The Philosophy Charles S. Peirce*, edited by Jacqueline Brunning and Paul Forster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 223.

<sup>21</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.290.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 8.142.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 6.291.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 7.265.

making, forcing his otherwise revolutionary mind to submit to the whims and wishes of capitalism.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps this is why Peirce's ultimate mandate, what he called his "first rule of reason," was to never allow any blockade of inquiry, to permit the radical scientific mind the freedom to inquire, to innovate, to guess at the great riddle of the universe, in ways Peirce, himself, was never permitted to do. For Peirce, the scientific method was *radical*, not conservative as some of his detractors falsely believed: a method of unbridled truth-seeking, creative imagining, of *guessing*, of chance, of merging ourselves with a knowable cosmos if only we were given the opportunity, that is, science, for Peirce, was a "*radicalism that tries experiments.*"<sup>27</sup> This critique of authority and capitalism would manifest time and again throughout his long career with an ire and vitriol unparalleled in philosophy until the rise of the social theorists of the Frankfurt School a good decade after his death.<sup>28</sup>

But what might have otherwise been a fruitful dialogue of synchronic doctrines between the first generation Marxist scholars and their American counterparts was marred so thoroughly by two primary culprits that, to this day, few and far between are those foolish enough to try to bridge what has become a seemingly insurmountable chasm between the two philosophical schools. Those two culprits, I argue, were none other than Max Horkheimer and Peirce's dearest, lifelong friend, William James.

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<sup>26</sup> Frank Thorn, for example, who was in charge of allocating research funds for the U.S. Coast Survey (of which Peirce was a practicing member), "believed in enforcing the distinction between theoretical and practical science by denying funding to the former. He immediately set about drastically reducing the salaries and operating expenses of the scientific staff, thus saving about \$25,000 during his tenure, but gutting the Survey's scientific program, especially the kind of research done by Peirce," Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 169.

<sup>27</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.148.

<sup>28</sup> The Frankfurt School was founded 1923 by Carl Grünberg.

In one of Horkheimer's seminal texts, *Eclipse of Reason*, articulating many of the central doctrines of the Frankfurt School,<sup>29</sup> Horkheimer devoted an entire chapter, "Means and Ends," to a systematic and scathing evisceration of the American pragmatists, so thorough and so devastating that I don't believe (with the exceptions of Jürgen Habermas and his lifelong friend, Peirce scholar Karl Otto-Apel) that relationship has ever meaningfully mended. But Horkheimer had a co-conspirator in his cause, one wholly unaware, at the time, of his participation in pragmatism's execution by the vaunted German theorist: this co-conspirator was none other than William James. Although it was Peirce who coined the phrase "pragmatism," it was James who popularized the term and presented it to the world. That James never fully understood Peirce is well-documented, by his own admission, indeed, so profoundly that Ralph Barton Perry once said, "perhaps it would be correct, and just to all parties, to say that the modern movement known as pragmatism is largely the result of James' misunderstanding of Peirce."<sup>30</sup> Peirce noticed this himself: "between this [i.e., James's definition] and mine there certainly appears to be no slight theoretical divergence"<sup>31</sup> and in a separate correspondence to James, "your mind and mine are as little adapted to understanding one another as two minds could be."<sup>32</sup> Peirce lamented:

I sent forth my statement in January, 1878; and for about twenty years never heard from it again. I let fly my dove; and that dove has never come back to me to this very day. But of late quite a brood of young ones have been fluttering about, from the feathers of which I fancy that mine had found a brood.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> An institution that included such radical thinkers as Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Georg Lukács, Herbert Marcuse, among many others.

<sup>30</sup> Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, 2 volumes (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1935), Vol. II, 409.

<sup>31</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.466.

<sup>32</sup> Cited in Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, *Op. Cit.*, 431.

<sup>33</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.17

This lead Peirce to abandon the term “pragmatism” altogether, in conjunction with his changing metaphysical views, to a new term, “pragmaticism,” “a term that he describes as so ugly it would remain safe from those who kidnapped ‘pragmatism.’”<sup>34</sup>

Central to James’ version of pragmatism was the self-admittedly “slipshod”<sup>35</sup> phrase “cash value” in reference to the metric by which to measure the efficacy of our beliefs. Although James attempted to retract that unfortunate phrase (or, at least, explain it properly) in a published defense of pragmatism against its detractors,<sup>36</sup> the cataclysmic damage had already been done. It doesn’t take a critical theorist to realize that a phrase like “cash value” would not sit well with a consortium of social theorists whose ultimate philosophical goal was to level as devastating a critique against the modern milieu of capitalism and commodity fetishism as possible. Indeed, Horkheimer saw (through James) as good an indication as any that the insidious talons of capitalism had infiltrated into the very heart of philosophy and the unholy offspring of philosophy’s induced marriage with commodity was none other than pragmatism itself. Horkheimer called it a philosophy of adaptation to indoctrination wherein the good pragmatist was synonymous with the good slave of industry; where all that “mattered” and all that was “true” was an instrumental attainment of the means to achieve ends proliferated by capital and commodity. To what degree Horkheimer’s claims might have been applicable to James is beyond the scope of this investigation but that Peirce was innocent of all charges seems absolutely beyond dispute and Horkheimer’s reading of Peirce was little more than the unforgivable (but understandable) retroactive injection of Jamesian pragmatism into

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<sup>34</sup> Richard Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 125.

<sup>35</sup> William James, “The Pragmatist Account of Truth and its Misunderstandings,” *The Philosophical Review* 17, no. 1 (Jan. 1908): 1–17, 1.

<sup>36</sup> See *Ibid.*



Peirce's doctrine, despite the fact that the two were so dissimilar as to warrant a paradigm shift *by* Peirce *away* from James later in his career (and long before Horkheimer came upon pragmatism). Had it not been for James' alterations of Peirce, and Horkheimer's subsequent critique, the long antipathy towards the Americans by their German counterparts may never have come about. In Peirce, Horkheimer ought to have seen a kindred spirit, for Peirce's pragmatism was a philosophy of creativity and imagination, of negative thinking and revolution, of guessing at the riddle of the universe and fighting tooth and nail against any authority (capitalism chief among them) that would dictate the ends of inquiry *for* a populace and streamline philosophy into the narrow channels of apology and reification of that totalitarian milieu. In sum, Peirce was a critical theorist in his *own* right, a fact rarely, if ever, noticed even by Peirce scholars and certainly not by any member of the Frankfurt School.<sup>37</sup>

To take on the Herculean task of trying to bridge this seemingly insurmountable chasm, there are several challenges that lie ahead: first, one must address *why* Peirce was so insistent that philosophy never be subjugated to socio-political ends (even the most benevolent); second, one must address Horkheimer's critique that Peircean pragmatism is exclusively instrumental by highlighting the abductive and inductive phases of Peirce's logic and excavating the imagination, wonder, creativity, free-play of ideas, and profoundly dialectical (i.e., negative) thinking nascent in his fallibilism, his first rule of reason, and his ultimate method of inquiry; third, one must explain what, precisely, "science" meant to Peirce and distance it from the Weberian concern of "technical rationality," that is, that science was a tool of indoctrination, by highlighting Peirce's insistence that science was not *scientism* nor was it ever meant to be an "abnormal

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<sup>37</sup> Though later in his career, Habermas would come round to a greater appreciation of Peirce's pragmatism.

reverence of scientists,”<sup>38</sup> nor was it a branch of *positivism* (which Peirce explicitly abhorred), by articulating the relationship *between* science, as Peirce conceived it, and logic which, for Peirce, was a branch of *normative* science and intimately related to both ethics and aesthetics.<sup>39</sup>

Lastly, one must bring Peirce into direct conversation not only with his primary detractor, Max Horkheimer, but also a member of the Frankfurt School whose philosophy demonstrated profound synchronicities with Peirce’s own. To this end I chose Herbert Marcuse. Douglas Kellner, to the best of his knowledge,<sup>40</sup> maintains that Marcuse had never read Peirce, and yet so profound are the complementary themes between these thinkers that the reader of this project may find themselves shocked by the realization that Marcuse was most likely entirely unfamiliar with Peirce’s work. Between Peirce’s fallibilism, his critique of the Gospel of Greed, his quest for Truth, and his scathing critique of authority (including a profound exploration of the indoctrination of the young, rampant censorship, historical revisionism, cultural isolationism, the use of language and

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<sup>38</sup> Justus Buchler, introduction to *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, by Charles S. Peirce (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), x.

<sup>39</sup> Peirce’s ruminations on the three normative sciences (logic, ethics, and aesthetics, by his reckoning) begin at CP 1.573. However, a particularly intriguing passage can be found at CP 5.35: “for if, as pragmatism teaches us, what we think is to be interpreted in terms of what we are prepared to do, then surely *logic*, or the doctrine of what we ought to think, must be an application of the doctrine of what we deliberately choose to do, which is *Ethics*.” Logic, thus, is an outgrowth, as he says, an application, of ethics, not the other way around. Further, as Potter notes, “pragmatism is a doctrine of logic. It is a logical method helping us to know just what we think, just what we believe. Our thought’s meaning is to be interpreted...in terms of its of its conceived consequences...thus logic depends upon ethics. But in its turn ethics must depend upon something else. Conduct is approved or disapproved to the degree that it conforms to fails to conform to some purpose, but the question remains as to what purposes are to be adopted in the first place,” Vincent Potter, S.J., *Charles S. Peirce: On Norms and Ideals* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967), 39. The task of discovering what we *ought* to admire, what is admirable *per se*, is the task of aesthetics. As Peirce noted, “[Ethics] supposes that there is some ideal state of things which, regardless of how it should be brought about and independently of any ulterior reason whatsoever, is held to be good or fine. In short, ethics must rest upon a doctrine which, without at all considering what our conduct is to be, divides ideally possible states of things into two classes, those that would be admirable and those that would be unadmirable, and undertakes to define what it is that constitutes the admirableness of an ideal,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.36.

<sup>40</sup> This revelation was the product of short correspondence I had with Dr. Kellner who assured me that, as far as he knew, Marcuse had never read Peirce.

semiotics to criminalize and marginalize dissenting voices), I offer a direct and immediate comparison to the complementary Marcusean themes of one-dimensionality, the performance principle operative in the advanced industrial society, the ingression of false needs, and artificial desublimation that all conspire to achieve the same insidious ends that Peirce articulated over a half a century earlier. Both offered a Utopian vision of the future: an aesthetic dimension freed from the indoctrinating trappings of technical rationality for Marcuse and, for Peirce, a democratic, hyperbolically inclusive, radically egalitarian<sup>41</sup> society where Truth is the ultimate value (as a goal in itself<sup>42</sup>) and solidarity and brotherhood aid us in achieving it. Some divergences inevitably emerge but, as I will demonstrate, what binds them so far outweighs what nuances drive them apart that it will put James' "slipshod" phrase and the resultant critique of Horkheimer in stark contrast to the reality of the synchronicities between Peirce and the critical theory of, at least, Herbert Marcuse. In sum, I hope to not only close the chasm wrought by decades of (unfounded) animosity by illuminating a Peirce far more dynamic, creative, imaginative, and critical than the one Horkheimer attacked, but offer new directions in scholarship for both pragmatists and critical theorists alike through a fusion-philosophy, "critical pragmatism," which remains faithful to both Marcuse and Peirce but speculates about something *more*, a guess at this particular riddle, for as Peirce said, "the truth is that the whole fabric of our knowledge is one matted felt of pure hypothesis confirmed and refined by induction. Not the smallest advance can be made in knowledge beyond the

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<sup>41</sup> As I will demonstrate throughout my analysis of the socio-political dimensions of Peirce's pragmatism, his method of inquiry will necessitate an equally radically form of community that is requisite for inquiry to unfold uninhibited.

<sup>42</sup> Peirce's student at Johns Hopkins, Christine Ladd-Franklin, remarked in 1916 that Peirce was a "profound, original, dispassionate and impassioned seeker of truth," Christine Ladd-Franklin, "Charles S. Peirce at the Johns Hopkins," *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods*, 13 (1916): 715–723, 716–717.

state of vacant staring, without making an abduction at every step.”<sup>43</sup> It’s the Peirce that proudly proclaimed, “I stand for, have always stood for the very freest of free-thinking,” that I want to elucidate, the man who said that “if there is anyone who goes beyond me in reprobation of all attempts and any attempt to stifle or discourage free-thought or its proper expression all I can say is that I have never yet met such a person.”<sup>44</sup> I want to illuminate the Peirce that Nathan Housan called “a visionary, a wise man, a seer,”<sup>45</sup> the Peirce that confronted the riddle of the Sphinx and sought to develop a philosophy so uncompromising, so “comprehensive that, for a long time to come, the entire work of human reason, in philosophy of every school, in physical science, in history, in sociology, and in whatever other department there may be, shall appear as the filling up of its details,”<sup>46</sup> erected upon an “edifice that shall outlast the vicissitudes of time.”<sup>47</sup> Here is the Peirce that looked his students in the eye and said, unflinchingly, to “never allow yourself to think that any definite problem is incapable of being solved”<sup>48</sup> and to “say to the student,” that though he must hold “fast to the string by which he controls” his imagination, so, too, must he “let his fancy take wing.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Charles S. Peirce, MS 692, cited in Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 72.

<sup>44</sup> Charles S. Peirce cited in Richard Robin, *Annotated Catalogue of the Papers of Charles S. Peirce* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967), L387b.

<sup>45</sup> John K. Sheriff. *Charles Peirce’s Guess at the Riddle: Grounds for Human Significance* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), ix.

<sup>46</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.

<sup>47</sup> Charles S. Peirce, *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition*, ed. the Peirce Edition Project (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1982 – Ongoing), W6:168. I will use the standard designation “W” followed by the volume and page number from here on to indicate this collection.

<sup>48</sup> Charles S. Peirce, *The Essential Peirce*, ed. Nathan Houser and Chrisian Kloesel, 2 Volumes (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), EP 2:188. I will use this standard designation for this edition from here on, indicating the volume and then page number.

<sup>49</sup> Charles S. Peirce cited in Richard Robin’s *Annotated Catalogue of the Papers of Charles S. Peirce*, *Op. Cit.*, R 413:264.

## Chapter 1

### Fallibilism and the Circuit of Inquiry

In 1868, Oliver Wendell Holmes received an urgent missive from Germany. Therein, William James excitedly recommended the formation of a unique consortium of extraordinary gentlemen in the form of a “philosophical society” that would “have regular meetings and discuss none but the very tallest and broadest questions – to be composed of none but the very topmost cream of Boston manhood.”<sup>50</sup> Along with figures like Chauncey Wright, Nicholas St. Green, John Fiske, and Francis Ellingwood Abbot, a young Charles Sanders Peirce, working for the U.S. Coast Survey at the time, joined their illustrious ranks. In this roiling milieu of revolutionary minds, American pragmatism was born. The precise evolution of the term is unclear. Although Peirce’s “Fixation of Belief,” and its sister essay, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear,” published in *Popular Science Monthly* in 1877 and 1878, were the first explorations of the *concepts* of pragmatism, the term, “pragmatism,” was never explicitly mentioned. James held that particular honor, as Dewey recounts:

The term pragmatism was introduced into literature in the opening sentences of Professor James’s California Union Address in 1898. The sentences run as follows: ‘the principal of pragmatism, as we may call it, may be expressed in a variety of ways, all of them very simple. In the *Popular Science Monthly* for January, 1878, Mr. Charles S. Peirce

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<sup>50</sup> Letter from William James to Oliver Wendell Holmes, January, 3, 1868, cited in Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, 2 volumes (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1935), Vol 1, 508.

introduces it as follows': etc. The readers who have turned to the volume referred to have not, however, found the word there.<sup>51</sup>

Yet, even James readily admitted that it was Peirce who coined the phrase and introduced it to that ragtag band of intellectuals in Cambridge. Although Peirce drew from the milieu of the Club, most notably Wright's ideas that "scientific laws do much more than summarize existing knowledge, they lead to new knowledge" which inspired Peirce's *own* ruminations on the scientific method as a means "for arriving at new experimental results,"<sup>52</sup> his ruminations leading up to his inclusion in the Club were already thoroughly pragmatic.

When Peirce was only ten years old, he composed a short tale entitled "Charles and Ben" (his brother). Amazingly, this document has survived and, though in a form so subtle and nascent I don't wish to say it's anything more than fancy with a hint, perhaps, of prophecy, Peirce told the tale of his brother, Ben, who sought to "climb the hill of knowledge. Now this is a very high hill and full of stones and briars – and rough places – but at the top there is a beautiful palace where there are many good and sensible people assembled."<sup>53</sup> After a long and arduous climb, Ben ascended to the top of this hill of knowledge and began to make "quite a figure among its learned inhabitants."<sup>54</sup> As a dutiful and doting brother, and with a keen desire all his own to ascend this height and bask in the glorious company of those elite minds on that palatial mountaintop, "Charles undertook the same journey."<sup>55</sup> But unlike his brother, Peirce did not write himself as

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<sup>51</sup> John Dewey, "The Pragmatism of Peirce," *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 13, no. 26 (Dec. 1916): 709 – 715, 709.

<sup>52</sup> Joseph Brent, *Charles S. Peirce: A Life* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 68.

<sup>53</sup> Collected by Harvard University, the Charles S. Peirce papers, cited in *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

having *already* reached the top, nor does he *ever* reach the top in his own narrative. Quite the contrary, Peirce situated himself as being “*now* on his way there and though he has not pursued exactly the same path yet he goes on so slow and sure that there can be no doubt of succeeding as well I hope as his brother.”<sup>56</sup> Hallmarks of some of the primary facets of Peirce’s mature philosophy were eerily present in this whimsical tale, though, again, such a claim may be little more than chasing after a will-o’-the-wisp. But see the emphasis on the goal, a mountain of *knowledge*, at an age when most children likely dream of mountains of candy, Peirce already bore signs of the true lover of wisdom. And atop the mountain who do we find but Peirce’s ideal community of inquirers, a community that is to be “considered as an end in itself,”<sup>57</sup> for we, individually, “cannot reasonably hope to attain the ultimate philosophy which we pursue; we can only seek it, therefore, for the *community* of philosophers.”<sup>58</sup> The *goal* is something not yet achieved, but remains possible, somewhere down the “long run” of inquiry’s unfolding. And the *method* is “slow and sure,” a careful plodding up this long path riddled with problems and obstacles that must be overcome. This led Peirce, even at a young age, to develop a philosophical method he called “pedestrianism,” the tortoise to his brilliant father’s hare,<sup>59</sup> that the slow and steady will ultimately win the race. “Logic, with its step-by-small-step progress, gave him, in the long run, the advantage over his facile, brilliant, impatient, and error-prone father.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* My italics.

<sup>57</sup> Charles S. Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, 8 Volumes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931 – 1936), CP 8.38. I will use the standard designation “CP” when referring to this collection from here on.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 6.265.

<sup>59</sup> “A few years before he died he stated that what he had accomplished in philosophy had been done by plodding. Faced with his brilliant and impatient father, Charles was to adopt the strategy of the tortoise in his race with the hare,” Brent, *Charles S. Peirce: A Life, Op. Cit.*, 43.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

With this nascent, proto-pragmatism in mind, combined with Peirce's contributions to the Metaphysical Club, that culminated (thematically if not in name) into "pragmatism" in his sister essays published in *Popular Science Monthly*, Peirce has become readily recognized as the founding father of pragmatism.<sup>61</sup> And just like pragmatism itself, Peirce's work encompassed logic,<sup>62</sup> science,<sup>63</sup> semiotics,<sup>64</sup> phenomenology,<sup>65</sup> and theology<sup>66</sup> to name but a few of the myriad branches of philosophy that piqued Peirce's boundless investigations.<sup>67</sup> Richard Bernstein eloquently

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<sup>61</sup> "Peirce stands out as the acknowledged father of pragmatism." Richard Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 119.

<sup>62</sup> "As the outstanding American logician of his day, his contributions helped to initiate the exciting advances in mathematical logic," Richard J. Bernstein, "Charles Sanders Peirce and the Nation," *The Antioch Review* 21, no. 1 (Spring 1961): 15 – 25, 15. Further, "Peirce was one of the creators of the logic of relations, the extension of classical logic and Boolean algebra that was needed for a full system of symbolic logic," Arthur W. Burks, "Peirce's Evolutionary Pragmatic Idealism," in "The Philosophy of C.S. Peirce," special issue, *Synthese* 106, no. 3 (March 1996): 323 – 372, 324.

<sup>63</sup> As pragmatists Josiah Royce and Fergus Kernan note: "Peirce was fond of saying that he grew up in a laboratory. Later, he did some good work in the observatory. Still later, he was busy with the conduct of a good many statistical researches in connection with the Coast Survey. He was early and long familiar with exact measurement, and with the theory and practice of the determination of the errors of measurement in the measuring sciences. So, when he spoke of being a scientific philosopher, he was not without a really close knowledge of what scientific method in philosophy ought to mean." Josiah Royce and Fergus Kernan, "Charles Sanders Peirce," *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 13, no. 26 (Dec. 1916): 701 – 709, 701 – 702. Brent corroborates this in noting that Peirce, at the tender age of 8, "set up his own laboratory at home and to work his way through Liebig's program of quantitative analysis," Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 47.

<sup>64</sup> A detailed analysis of Peirce's semiotics is beyond the scope of this current investigation for, as Nagel once commented, to analyze Peirce's semiotics in detail one runs "the risk of treading upon ground on which angels fear to step." Ernest Nagel, "Charles S. Peirce, Pioneer of Modern Empiricism," *Philosophy of Science* 7, no. 1 (Jan. 1940): 69 – 80, 76. Umberto Eco, a noted Peircean semiotician, offers a similar warning, saying: "nor do I dare approach the Peircean theory of indexicality." Umberto Eco, "Peirce's Notion of Interpretant," *MLN* 91, no. 6, *Comparative Literature* (Dec. 1976): 1457 – 1472, 1465. Thus I will confine my analysis of his semiotics to its immediate pertinence to the project at hand and nothing more.

<sup>65</sup> What Peirce called "phaneroscopy": "the description of the phaneron; and by the phaneron I mean the collective total of all that is in any way or in any sense present to the mind, quite regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not. If you ask present when, and to whose mind, I reply that I leave these questions unanswered, never having entertained a doubt that those features of the phaneron that I have found in my mind are present at all times and to all minds. So far as I have developed this science of phaneroscopy, it is occupied with the formal elements of the phaneron," Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.284.

<sup>66</sup> See Peirce's ruminations on "evolutionary love," for example, Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.287.

<sup>67</sup> "Who is the most original and the most versatile intellect that the Americas have so far produced? The answer 'Charles S. Peirce' is uncontested...mathematician, astronomer, chemist, geodesist, surveyor, cartographer, metrologist, spectrscopist, engineer, inventor; psychologist, philologist, lexiconographer, historian of science, mathematical economist, lifelong student of medicine; book reviewer, dramatist, actor, short story writer; phenomenologist, semiotician, logician, rhetorician [and] metaphysician...the first



summarizes Peirce's immense ability as a polymath and a true seeker of wisdom in *all* its possible manifestations:

If we were to draw up a list of ideal requirements for a philosopher, we would certainly want to include an intimate knowledge of the empirical sciences and the formal disciplines such as logic and mathematics. Our philosopher should also have a subtle knowledge of the philosophic tradition, preferably one gained from original sources. But knowledge of the sciences, logic, and the history of philosophy is not enough. A philosopher must also combine careful analysis with a curiosity and imagination that ranges over the totality of human experience. The degree to which Charles Sanders Peirce was proficient in all these respects...is unique, and it would be difficult to name another American who was as erudite and original as Peirce.<sup>68</sup>

Peirce's diverse interests, combined with a lifetime of disappointments in his attempts to complete his ultimate system (his "guess at the riddle"), gives him a profoundly enigmatic<sup>69</sup> quality when one attempts to sift through the tens of thousands of pages available to us now. As a result, his massive corpus of work,<sup>70</sup> bequeathed to us today, is a maelstrom of notes, letters, and, unpublished manuscripts, mixed in with published articles of which, as Brent notes, Peirce "wrote more than one version of almost

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modern experimental psychologist...the first metrologist to use a wave-length of light as a unit of measure...if he has any equals in that respect in the entire history of philosophy, they do not number more than two," Max Fisch, introductory note to *The Play of Musement*, by Thomas Sebeok (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 17.

<sup>68</sup> Richard Bernstein, "Charles Sanders Peirce and the Nation," *Op. Cit.*, 15.

<sup>69</sup> "Charles Peirce was, and to a degree still is, an enigma," John E. Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 3. Further, as Muirhead notes, "while some may find in this many-sidedness an admirable feature marking Peirce out as the truly seminal writer that he was...others may find it more of a challenge," J.H. Muirhead, "Peirce's Place in American Philosophy," *The Philosophical Review* 37, no. 5 (Sept. 1928): 460 – 481, 460.

<sup>70</sup> Brent places Peirce's work at roughly 80,000 hand-written pages (Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 289) and De Waal places that number around 100,000 (Cornelis de Waal, *On Peirce* [Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001], 3), both far exceed Edward C. Moore's "suggestion in the preface to the first volume of *Writing of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition* that it would take approximately 104 five-hundred-page volumes to publish Peirce's complete works," John Sheriff, *Charles Peirce's Guess at the Riddle: Grounds for Human Significance* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), xix.

everything he believed important” and that it became “impossible to decide which version of a letter (and sometimes there are many) he sent, or if he sent it at all.”<sup>71</sup>

The chaos of manuscripts should not be viewed as an indication that Peirce *had* no system whatsoever. Quite the contrary, he explicitly outlined it on multiple occasions in his (ultimately doomed) attempt to find a publisher.<sup>72</sup> As Smith notes, it would be “an error to suppose that [Peirce] developed no clear doctrine whatever,” for “if we considered the whole range of his thought there emerges a unity which is as remarkable as it is unexpected.”<sup>73</sup> Feibleman agrees, and in his own work on Peirce he attempts to make explicit Peirce’s nascent architectonic left unfulfilled due to Peirce’s turbulent academic career,<sup>74</sup> noting that “implicit in his isolated papers is the outline of a system. The fact that he never got round to presenting his system explicitly does not mean that it is not present in his writings.”<sup>75</sup> Between Harvard President Charles Eliot, astronomer and Peirce’s nemesis Simon Newcomb, and even, on one critical occasion, William James himself,<sup>76</sup> Peirce ran headlong time and again into a bureaucratic apparatus that

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<sup>71</sup> Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, xiii – xiv.

<sup>72</sup> The most comprehensive example was his 1902 application for a grant from the Carnegie Institute to complete his life’s work. It included 32 papers and/or topics, some of which had been published, much of which had not been published, starting with *On the Classification of the Theoretic Sciences*, moving through several treatises on his *Categories*, terminating in his theory of *Economics of Research*, the *Course of Research*, *On Systems of Doctrine*, and, ultimately, *On the Reality and Nature of Time and Space*. Cited in Brent, *Charles S. Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 280 – 282.

<sup>73</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 5.

<sup>74</sup> “Peirce was...lead by Kant to see that he could not consider philosophy in the English empirical or piecemeal manner only, as a series of assorted subjects to be carefully approached. He must come to it in the grand manner of the best of the German metaphysicians: as a self-consistent body of knowledge, excluding nothing and applicable to everything.” James K. Feibleman, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Charles S. Peirce: Interpreted as a System* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT. Press, 1970), 34 – 35.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 24. Further, as Bastian notes, too, “the various elements of Peirce’s philosophy, whether they be called the pragmatic and realistic, or the naturalistic and transcendental, can and ought to be reconciled with one another,” Ralph J. Bastian, S. J., “The ‘Scholastic’ Realism of C.S. Peirce,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 14, no. 2 (Dec. 1953): 246 – 249, 246. And Brent, too, explicitly states that Peirce “was one of the most original thinkers and system builders of any time, and certainly the greatest philosopher the United States has ever seen,” Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, xiv.

<sup>76</sup> At a critical juncture in Peirce’s turbulent career, James arranged for Peirce to give a series of lectures at Harvard where he presented some of his mature work on metaphysics which proved to be so obscure that

failed to see the merit in his innovative insights and chose, instead, to dismiss him out of hand due to reasons entirely unrelated to the quality of his work.<sup>77</sup>

Peirce saw conspiracy everywhere and, as a result, his distaste for authority's ubiquitous ability to alter the trajectory of otherwise free-inquiry and the curbing of the creative expression of great minds grew exponentially. Brent notes one subtle (but in this context, profoundly pertinent) example of this phenomenon in Peirce's life while he was working for the Coast Survey:

Since he found his interest in any science concentrated primarily on its logic and method and only minimally on its techniques, his commitment to gravimetrics was bound to lessen drastically in a few years. He quickly expanded his researches to include the theory of errors of observation, the logic and mathematics of measurement as such, and other, more interesting problems associated with gravimetrics, but the Survey proved increasingly resistant to these lines of original research and pressured him constantly for 'results.'<sup>78</sup>

Peirce encountered this everywhere, even in academia, where Harvard President Charles Eliot desired only "safe" faculty, teaching "safe" subjects, and professors expressing only orthodox views. Peirce's "unyielding quest for truth, regardless of conventional sanctities"<sup>79</sup> no doubt caused the dissolution of Peirce's relationship with Harvard for "a Socratic mind such as Peirce's, which delighted in putting every idea to the test and in following an argument irrespective of where it led, was bound to raise Eliot's

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James "was unable to abstract even a semblance of pragmatism as he knew it...he therefore strongly opposed publication of the lectures" (Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life, Op. Cit.*, 291) which proved to be a devastating blow to Peirce's career and another lost opportunity to complete his system.

<sup>77</sup> It became increasingly clear that between Peirce's disregard for money (he rarely, if ever, stayed on budget for any project), his wandering mind (his diverse interests often stopped him from completing projects he started before moving on to another), and his reputation as a Dandy, a drug-abuser, and his dalliance with a mysterious French woman (Juliette) while he was still married, these issues, and not the quality of his work, held him back throughout his entire career.

<sup>78</sup> Brent, *Charles S. Peirce: A Life, Op. Cit.*, 93.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

suspicions.”<sup>80</sup> Undoubtedly, this lead Peirce to his critique of academia as a whole, reflective of the greater ill of the Gilded Age that under this blanketing conservatism, few and far between were the great minds capable of flourishing and fewer still are the students capable of ascending to the heights of their now-handcuffed professors:

They want *results*, tangible to them. The teacher is dismissed as a failure, or, if he is allowed another chance, he will take good care to reverse the method of his teaching and give them *results* -- especially, as that is the lazy way. These are some of the causes of there being so few strong reasoners in the world...<sup>81</sup>

The ingression of bureaucratic, economic, and socio-political values into the otherwise free-unfolding of inquiry was not only a perennial theme in Peirce’s work but, too, as we’ll see, situates itself at the very heart of Herbert Marcuse’s critique of academia and informs his radical pedagogy. As Brent notes, Peirce leveled a “thoroughgoing and millennial condemnation of the Gilded Age, with its massive greed, social Darwinism, and inhumane social values expressed by late nineteenth-century political economy.”<sup>82</sup> In one of Peirce’s more poetic ruminations, he said:

The reign of terror was very bad; but now the Gradgrind banner has been this century long flaunting in the face of heaven, with an insolence to provoke the very skies to scowl and rumble. Soon a flash and quick peal will shake economists quite out of their complacency, too late. The twentieth century, in its latter half, shall surely see the deluge-tempest burst upon the social order, - to clear upon a world as deep in ruin as that greed-philosophy has long plunged it into guilt. No post-thermidorean high jinks then!<sup>83</sup>

Peirce’s prophetic ruminations on the late twentieth-century’s immersion in capitalistic greed would run parallel to the central focus of the Frankfurt School’s critique wherein

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>81</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.657.

<sup>82</sup> Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 212.

<sup>83</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.292.

the values of capital, above all else, would come to dictate the trajectory of inquiry and the deployment of reason itself. Horkheimer called this a manifestation of “instrumentalism,” namely, the deployment of rational faculties *solely* to ascertain the means to achieve goals prescribed by someone (or something) external to the inquirer him/herself. From the start, Peirce railed *against* this form of instrumentalism that he saw as a blatant attempt by those in power (who rarely knew anything about the subjects at hand but who controlled the avenues of capital requisite for ongoing research) to stifle creativity unless that creativity somehow fed into their own coffers.<sup>84</sup> Even in the formation of his own Metaphysical Club, Peirce insisted that its constitution ought to have but one rule: “preventing it from wasting the only intrinsically precious element in the world, as so many other societies waste it, in the idle frivolity they call ‘business’”<sup>85</sup> to focus instead on the sharing of ideas and the ongoing quest for Truth.

This perennial theme throughout Peirce’s career, the hampering of the free-flow of ideas, lead him to denounce *any* socio-political ingression into the otherwise autonomous inquiries of scientists, philosophers, and all those who would inquire. As Bernstein warns, “Peirce was suspicious of the demand that philosophy should become

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<sup>84</sup> This form of instrumentalism was rampant in Peirce’s own life, handicapping his innovations in a milieu of tightening budgets wherein only the avenues of scientific research that were profitable were championed over the pursuit of Truth, by whatever form it might otherwise take. As Brent relates: “the Survey had been an organization in the old style: decentralized, informal, and casual. Finances were more often than not adjusted to meet conditions as they arose. All that previous superintendents had required of the assistants was their accountability in carrying out scientific work. The assistants had very general instructions which allowed them great latitude, and this was considered one of the advantages of being in Survey employ...but the impetus to reform and reduced government spending...changed the government’s attitude toward many of its departments, particularly those engaged in scientific work. The change which Peirce objected to and attacked had brought about the situation, so lamented by scientists in the twentieth century, in which the bureaucracy takes precedence over and judges all functions within it...henceforth, the criterion of research would reflect the practical and immediate needs of politics,” Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life, Op. Cit.*, 181 – 182. This clear example of instrumentalism (as Horkheimer defined it) was the bane of Peirce’s professional career and clearly *not* something Peirce, himself, was guilty of championing.

<sup>85</sup> C.S. Peirce, manuscript 317 in the Charles Sanders Peirce Papers at the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

practical in the sense of dealing with current social and political issues.”<sup>86</sup> As Gallie notes, “Peirce fully recognizes that even in its most developed phases science remains hedged about, and is to some extent directed by, the needs and interests of practical life” for “science, the free spirit of inquiry, the will to learn, have their roots in our practical beliefs, and have as their initial motive simply the ‘fixation’ of these beliefs.”<sup>87</sup> Resisting the impulse to subordinate philosophy to socio-political goals, Peirce went so far as to say:

To declare that the sole reason for scientific research is the good of society is to encourage those pseudo-scientists to claim, and the general public to admit, that they, who deal with the applications of knowledge, are the true men of science, and that the theoreticians are little better than idlers.<sup>88</sup>

Although Peirce was adamantly opposed to the injection of capitalistic motivations into the method of inquiry, noting that “the worst feature of the present state of things is that the great majority of the members of many scientific societies, and a large part of others, are men whose chief interest in science is as a means of gaining money, and who have a contempt, or half-contempt, for pure science,”<sup>89</sup> his central concern was the subordination of science (and the scientific method) to the interests of society, in general:

Truth is truth, whether it is opposed to the interests of society to admit it or not -- and that the notion that we must deny what it is not conducive to the stability of British society to affirm is the mainspring of the mendacity and hypocrisy which Englishmen so commonly regard as virtues. I must confess that I belong to that class of scallawags who purpose, with God's help, to look the truth in the face, whether doing so be conducive to the interests of society or not.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Richard Bernstein, *Praxis and Action* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 201.

<sup>87</sup> W. B. Gallie, *Peirce and Pragmatism* (Middlesex: Penguin Books: 1952), 89.

<sup>88</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.142.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.143.

The goal of philosophy, for Peirce, which he equates with the deployment of the scientific method, is the attainment of Truth, to the greatest degree possible, whether or not that Truth in any way benefits society. Ultimately, “the road to truth need not always follow what were perceived to be the immediate needs of any given society,”<sup>91</sup> for two reasons I will discuss at length: (a) the long run theory of truth cannot be limited to the “immediate” needs of a community and (b) the ideal community is, itself, unlimited, and not a specific community in time and place. The ongoing quest for Truth supercedes a specific community in a specific time, and thus should not (*must* not) be subordinated to immediate socio-political concerns. This would violate Peirce’s ultimate mandate, his first rule of reason, which demands a dissolution of *any* blockade of inquiry and subordinating inquiry to the demands of society would be precisely such a blockade and precisely the *same* blockade that Peirce ran into time and time again throughout his life.

But should we engage in the type of negative thinking Marcuse championed, to negate the current structures and postulate an alternative, there emerges, quite unexpectedly, a profound socio-political stance that does, indeed, influence inquiry and (though Peirce might not wish to admit it) *must* influence inquiry as the only acceptable socio-political coordination: if philosophy-science must be free to inquire as it will such that nothing block the road of inquiry, a socio-political coordination must be forged that *allows* that free-play of ideas to unfold uninhibited. As such, Peirce is bound by his rule of reason to support a kind of radical democracy of inquiry. As Anderson notes, Peirce shared with Dewey and many of the other pragmatists the “common belief that philosophy-science, whatever its aim, needs to be relatively free from traditional forms of

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<sup>91</sup> Douglas R. Anderson, “A Political Dimension of Fixing Belief,” in *The Rule of Reason: The Philosophy Charles S. Peirce*, edited by Jacqueline Brunning and Paul Forster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 227.

authority in order to carry out its work.”<sup>92</sup> That, “whether one wants to articulate an evolutionary cosmology or make a critical assessment of particular social institutions, there is no way to be effective if authorities such as churches or political parties stand in the way and manipulate one’s failure.”<sup>93</sup>

Thus, Peirce’s concerns that philosophy ought not be subordinated to socio-political ideologies are made plain. First, the concerns of a specific community in a specific time are not, necessarily, the concerns of the unlimited community over the long run. As Gallie notes, “the ends and standards of scientific inquiry cannot be equated with those of practice – whether conceived in terms of immediate economic utility, personal well-being, or social cohesion”<sup>94</sup> for “inquiry can only fulfill its proper function, the settlement of belief, if it abjures all thought of an immediate or temporarily useful settlement.”<sup>95</sup> As Thompson notes, “the final aim of each inquirer is never the verification of this or that hypothesis but rather the truth which is pursued by the *unlimited* community.”<sup>96</sup> Second, it is not always abundantly clear that a society in which one is living is, in fact, free from the indoctrinating tendencies of authority, as we will see in our subsequent chapters on Marcuse and his critique of even the most purportedly egalitarian societies like the United States, and thus one runs the risk of employing philosophy not to Truth but to the aims of an authority masquerading as a democratic system that only *purportedly* values free inquiry. Third, even the most benevolent socio-political concerns may become, themselves, a type of authority, for if the search for Truth

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Gallie, *Peirce and Pragmatism, Op. Cit.*, 89.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Manley Thompson, *The Pragmatic Philosophy of C.S. Peirce* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), 143. My italics.



is subordinated to the good of the community, should Truth prove to countermand the goals of that community, the quest for Truth would be stifled and only the experimental results conducive to the goals of even the most benevolent society would be allowed to flourish. As Anderson notes, “the political situation, as Peirce saw it, is that the subservience of philosophy-science to social needs is yet another, more subtle, form of authority.”<sup>97</sup> In Peirce’s critique of Pearson’s *Grammar*, for example, he notes: “we are told that we must not believe a certain purely theoretical proposition because it is ‘anti-social’ to do so, and because to do so ‘is opposed to the interests of society.’”<sup>98</sup> As Gallie notes, “if once science is directed to fixing belief in subservience to the interim needs of practice, it thereby ceases to be genuine science.”<sup>99</sup> Thus, even the most benevolent social arrangements become “authoritarian” in this narrow-sense of violating Peirce’s first rule of reason by blockading potential avenues of inquiry.<sup>100</sup>

Yet, even though the aims of philosophy must not be subordinated to the good of the community, there is no necessary reason that the two do not converge and, I argue, that convergence would be far more than mere serendipity. For what does Peirce ultimately critique? His is a critique of *any* blockade to ongoing inquiry, a deep and far-reaching liberalism and inclusiveness that demands, on principle, the dissolution of all authoritarian powers that would hinder the free, communal participation in inquiry. As Peirce said in a letter to Francis Russell in 1904:

I stand for, have always stood for the very freest of free-thinking. If there is anyone who goes beyond me in reprobation of all attempts and any

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<sup>97</sup> Anderson, “A Political Dimension of Fixing Belief,” *Op. Cit.*, 231.

<sup>98</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.143

<sup>99</sup> Gallie, *Peirce and Pragmatism*, *Op. Cit.*, 89.

<sup>100</sup> “This...enables the actuality of Peirce’s greatest philosophical fear: closures of avenues of inquiry,” Anderson, “A Political Dimension of Fixing Belief,” *Op. Cit.*, 231.

attempt to stifle or discourage free-thought or its proper expression all I can say is that I have never yet met such a person.<sup>101</sup>

As Anderson notes, “Peirce’s own conception of the philosophical-scientific community’s role within the larger sociopolitical community involves a much deeper sort of liberalism in which all avenues of inquiry remain open, though in light of an ideal hope of convergence.”<sup>102</sup>

Thus, although Peirce showed little *explicit* concern for the social arrangements in which his ideal method of inquiry might flourish,<sup>103</sup> this convergence of what is good for the community and the goals of philosophy is most likely best served in some form of democracy, potentially, as Anderson suggests, “the best political community, in

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<sup>101</sup> Charles S. Peirce in Richard Robin, *Annotated Catalogue of the Papers of Charles S. Peirce* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967), L387b.

<sup>102</sup> Anderson, “A Political Dimension of Fixing Belief,” *Op. Cit.*, 232.

<sup>103</sup> However, it must be noted that Peirce was never wholly explicit on this point, and his assessment of some ideal form of sociopolitical arrangement varied throughout his career. In what Anderson refers to as his “more cynical moments,” (Anderson, “A Political Dimension of Fixing Belief,” *Op. Cit.*, 236), Peirce recommends something more akin to a benevolent dictatorship or, perhaps, a rule of an elite band of philosopher kings. Peirce notes that “a modern Pythagorean brotherhood...sincerely devoted to pure science” would make “not only the most exquisitely virtuous society ever on earth, but also, what is far higher in their eyes, the wisest of all the race of men” and “subject the rest of mankind to the governance of these chosen best,” Charles S. Peirce in *Historical Perspectives on Peirce’s Logic of Science: A History of Science*, ed. Carolyn Eisele (Berlin: Mouton-DeGruyter, 1985). 2:561-2. This position, I argue, is dependent upon how expansive Peirce’s “ideal community of inquirers” ought to be. Specifically, how Peirce viewed those who lacked, in his eyes, the intellectual rigor of the scientist-philosopher and what role that individual ought to play in the community. As hinted in our discussion of the method of authority and, too, as Anderson notes, “on many occasions, Peirce remarked that those who refused to think for themselves *ought* to be ruled or enslaved,” (Anderson, “A Political Dimension of Fixing Belief,” *Op. Cit.*, 236) which, too, might account for Peirce’s “apparent acquiescence in his family’s anti-abolitionism” (*Ibid*). However, in light of his method of inquiry, such enslavement would result in either the silencing of voices (thereby, the cutting off of avenues for inquiry and engagement) or else, indirectly, remove the potential future contributions from those enslaved who are subsequently denied the ability to become educated sufficiently to participate in the method of inquiry with the greater community. As such, I argue that Peirce, to be true to his own method, could not advocate such a government but, instead, the more liberal democracy that Anderson recommends above. Nevertheless, there is little to explicitly corroborate Anderson’s reading from Peirce’s collected papers where even the word, “democracy,” appears only twice, though Peirce did explicitly say that “freedom is the {hypothesis} or condition of democracy” (Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.276, Fn 1) and since the freedom to inquire was a perennial theme in Peirce it would follow, at least in general, that Peirce would advocate a democratic political system where freedom is the necessary condition. Further, in CP 1.654, Peirce championed the endoxa of “what the healthy, natural, normal democracy thinks” though fails to elaborate as to what, precisely, he means by that.

[Peirce's] eyes, is a democratic republic that keeps the possibility of this deeper liberalism most alive."<sup>104</sup> In identifying the counterproductive methods of belief formation (as I will explore in the subsequent chapters), those antithetical to the flourishing of democratic inquiry and the communal ascent to Truth, Peirce effectively created a quasi-critical theory by enumerating the aspects of tenacity, *a priority* and, especially, authority, that blockade the freedom of inquirers through processes of historical revisionism, isolationism, indoctrination and totalitarian dominion.

But it was not a rugged or atomic individualism that Peirce championed where only great men of science (of which he included himself) could come to Truth without aid, assistance, or inspiration. Quite the contrary, the failure of most inquiries is due precisely to this unwavering (and entirely misguided) faith in a Horatio Alger bootstrapping mythos that one can make it entirely on one's own. In isolation from one's fellows, one's beliefs are never challenged, never refined, never improved, for it is only in the company of a coordination of other minds that Truth may be asymptotically approached over time. Peirce always surrounded himself by such a cohort throughout his life: from his 1870 expedition with the Coast Survey (his "first experience of large-scale international scientific cooperation" that "illustrated for him the importance of the community of science in reevaluating and validating hypotheses"), to the formation of the Metaphysical Club, to his consortium of students at Johns Hopkins (including John Dewey, where he formed a new Metaphysical Club culminating in a published work, and one of the most prestigious of Peirce's career [championed by John Venn himself] where he and his students combined their efforts to write *Studies in Logic by Members of the Johns Hopkins University* to which Peirce [in a rare display of modesty] took no credit

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<sup>104</sup> Anderson, "A Political Dimension of Fixing Belief," *Op. Cit.*, 232.

but attributed everything to the work of his students in concerted effort), Peirce was ever and always enmeshed in a great community of minds. Thus, the “central theme of pragmatism,” as de Waal notes, “is that philosophical research is a profoundly social enterprise.”<sup>105</sup> As Peirce noted, “no man can be logical whose supreme desire is [limited to] the well-being of himself or of any other existing person or collection of persons”<sup>106</sup> but, rather, one must identify one’s interests “with those of an unlimited community”<sup>107</sup> of which “you and I” are “mere cells of a social organism.”<sup>108</sup> Indeed, as Bernstein rightly suggests, “the community of inquirers is the basis for defining both truth and reality”<sup>109</sup> and lies at the heart of Peirce’s entire enterprise.<sup>110</sup> This conception of the unlimited community places Peirce solidly (perhaps even hyperbolically) in the camp of adherents to social individualism and democratic egalitarianism in the communal coordination of inquiry towards a common goal: the flourishing of all through ever-increasing approximations of the “Truth”<sup>111</sup> awaiting us (ideally) at the end of the long run.

Peirce’s mandate, this first rule of reason (“do not block the way of inquiry”<sup>112</sup>), infiltrates every facet of his entire philosophical system, so much so that I’d go so far as to say that it is the single most important aspect of his pragmatism (which is a bold claim

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<sup>105</sup> Cornelis De Waal, *On Pragmatism* (California: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), ii.

<sup>106</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 2.661.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 2.654.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.673.

<sup>109</sup> Bernstein, “Charles Sanders Peirce and the Nation,” *Op. Cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>110</sup> Brent maintains that Peirce’s early expedition to analyze the solar eclipse on December 22· 1870, as part of a “large-scale international scientific cooperation” may well have “illustrated for him the importance of the community of science in reevaluating and validating its hypotheses,” Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 80. Of course, this is merely speculation on Brent’s part and should be considered no more than intriguing trivia in Peirce’s life within the context of his burgeoning respect for the communal process of knowledge acquisition.

<sup>111</sup> I will discuss Peirce’s conception of “Truth” and his “long run” theory throughout the course of this project.

<sup>112</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.135.

considering the 100,000 some-odd pages he produced throughout his lifetime). Here, explicitly, it manifests as a guard against individual isolationism and the bootstrapping mythos: without a community around us, we have no foils against which to try out our beliefs, no keen, critical minds to challenge us, better us, test us and help us grow, intellectually. As Peirce said of his pragmatism, “both logically and dynamically the whole doctrine develops out of the *desire to know*, or *philosophia*, which carries with it the confession that we do not know already.”<sup>113</sup> In a sense, this is no different from the Socratic definition of wisdom and the Socratic<sup>114</sup> method of *elenchus* for, as Staab notes, according to the first rule of reason, “one has the responsibility both to learn from and to speak to fellow inquirers.”<sup>115</sup> Socrates’ definition of wisdom is recounted in Plato’s *Apology*: “I am wiser than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know; so I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know.”<sup>116</sup> How much this resonates with Peirce’s dictum that “the first step toward *finding out* is to acknowledge you do not satisfactorily know already; so that no blight can so surely arrest all intellectual growth as the blight of cocksureness; and ninety-nine out of every hundred good heads are reduced to impotence by that malady – of whose inroads they are most strangely unaware!”<sup>117</sup>

This led Peirce on a direct collision course with Descartes. Beyond the rejection of Descartes’ presumption that a single individual, in total isolation, could come upon

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 8 Bibliography General c. 1893 [G-c.1983-5].

<sup>114</sup> Peirce notes, in discussing “the rivulets at the head of the river of pragmatism” that “Socrates bathed in these waters,” *Ibid.*, CP 5.11.

<sup>115</sup> Janice M. Staab, “The Laboratory-Trained Believer: Peirce on the Scientific Character of Belief,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 30, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 939 – 957, 939.

<sup>116</sup> Plato, *Five Dialogues*, trans. G.M.A. Grube (New York: Hackett, 2002), 26.

<sup>117</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.13.

absolute Truth, and beyond the rejection of Descartes' presumption that the intuitive knowing of the contents of one's mind (without an empirical component of inquiry) was sufficient for inquiry, the very assumption of apodictic certainty was anathema for Peirce. Descartes famously responded to the skeptical syllogism (that knowledge requires absolute certainty, we can never *have* absolute certainty, therefore we can claim to know anything), by refuting the second premise and providing (what he thought was) absolute certainty in the form of the *Cogito*. But, for Peirce, adhering to his first rule of reason, both skepticism *and* dogmatism (the claim of absolute certainty) provided blockades of inquiry. On the one hand, if we can never know anything, why bother inquiring? On the other, if we already know something for certain, why bother inquiring? In response, "Peirce sought to wedge a third alternative between skepticism and dogmatism," opposing "the dogmatist's claim that we know with certainty that some particular beliefs are true, while at the same time dismissing the skeptic's conclusion that it follows from this that all our beliefs must be dismissed as untrustworthy."<sup>118</sup> This is Peirce's *fallibilism* that, I contend, is based upon his simple, but pivotal, mandate that we never block the road of inquiry. Indeed, for Peirce, fallibilism was the *only* epistemological stance that reflected inquiry *as it actually occurs*. As Peirce said, "nothing can be more completely contrary to a philosophy the fruit of a scientific life than infallibilism, whether arrayed in its old ecclesiastical trappings, or under its recent 'scientistic' disguise."<sup>119</sup> As Buchler notes, "the pages of Peirce vibrate with the effort to place philosophy on a scientific

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<sup>118</sup> De Waal, *On Peirce, Op. Cit.*, 38.

<sup>119</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8 Bibliography General c. 1893 [G-c.1983-5]. Key to note here, too, is Peirce's adamant rejection of "scienticism" of which is so often (wrongly) accused.

basis.”<sup>120</sup> But “scientific philosophy,” for Peirce, had “a perfectly literal implication, at once faithful to the method of science and the scope of philosophical tradition, namely, that the broadest speculative theories should be experimentally verifiable.”<sup>121</sup> That philosophical theories should be “experimentally verifiable” is not merely an attitude that “is inimical to philosophies in which intuitive cognition is fetish,”<sup>122</sup> but a rejection of any philosophical method that does not require communication between individuals. Such a theory would guard against any socio-political structure that would otherwise attempt to force “truth” down upon an individual in isolation from his or her fellows. As Buchler notes:

To Peirce the scientific method represents the antithesis of individualism. What distinguishes it from other methods of inquiry is its cooperative or public character. It conceives of evidence as an objective factor inviting universal examination and competing ultimate unanimity; it conceives of its results as essentially provisional or corrigible; and for these reasons it ensures measurable progress.<sup>123</sup>

Nor was Peirce’s method of inquiry an “abnormal veneration of science,”<sup>124</sup> for as Buchler notes:

Peirce’s actual scientific experience, his comprehensive grasp of the scientific enterprise, and his analysis of induction, led him to expect no specific guarantees of unfailing correctness, no royal road...but instead to understand that its power dwells in the capacity, through constant

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<sup>120</sup> Justus Buchler, introduction to *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, by Charles S. Peirce (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), x.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* Further, as Brent notes, “this is not to say that other philosophers and scientists had not thought and written about the method of science, because they had, beginning with the Greeks. But Peirce put that method in its modern form with such an elegant fit that...though revolutionary, appear to us now merely the common-sense of it. To read Popper or Carl Hempel on the logic of science after reading [Peirce] shows how little has been added to the model first proposed by Peirce over a century ago, and may also show that some elements, particularly the essentiality of hypothetical inference, have been removed with damaging effect to our understanding of science,” Brent, *Charles S. Peirce: A Life, Op. Cit.*, 117.

<sup>122</sup> Buchler, introduction to *Philosophical Writings of Peirce, Op. Cit.* x..

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

modification of its own conclusions, to approximate indefinitely to the truth.<sup>125</sup>

Indeed, “Peirce defined science as an activity exercised by people passionately committed to the principle that they should be ready to abandon any hypothesis that is contradicted by the facts.”<sup>126</sup> Although, as we’ll see, Peirce is often accused of being a positivistic reductionist (absorbed entirely with “facts”), the hypothetical component, the *guess*, the abductive procedure of creative, imaginative, free-play of ideas is as central to his method as the critical, discerning eye he turns to the inductive analysis of those hypotheses, effectively guarding against indoctrination on the one hand and championing creative imagination on the other.

Eschewing any possibility of absolute, timeless certainty by respecting ongoing dialogue and the evolutionary unfolding of scientific discoveries, Peirce’s epistemology was ultimately fallibilistic, that is, “the doctrine that our knowledge is never absolute but always swims, as it were, in a continuum of uncertainty and of indeterminacy.”<sup>127</sup> And yet Peirce does not leave us in hopeless skepticism<sup>128</sup> but provides, instead, a robust and dynamic method of belief formation and a detailed account of a sound method of inquiry. As De Waal notes,

Peirce rejects the dogmatist’s claim that we know with certainty that some particular beliefs are true, while at the same time dismissing the skeptic’s conclusion that it follows from this that all our beliefs must be regarded untrustworthy. Instead, Peirce argues that overall we can trust our beliefs, but we should not bet our lives on any single one of them; a view he later

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> Guy Debrock, “Peirce, a Philosopher for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Part I: Introduction,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 28, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 1 – 18, 1.

<sup>127</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.171.

<sup>128</sup> “The fallibilist does not wish to deny that we may often have knowledge. If knowledge is justified true belief, then the fallibilist may grant that in all probability many of our justified beliefs are, as a matter of fact, true,” James O. Bennett, “Peirce and the Logic of Fallibilism,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 18, no. 4 (Fall 1982): 353 – 366, 355.



referred to as critical common-sensism. In Peirce's eyes, the skeptic makes the basic mistake of concluding from the fact that *each* belief can be doubted, that therefore *all* beliefs can be doubted. But these are different things. If at an intersection you can go in any direction, this does not mean that you can go in all of them at once.<sup>129</sup>

This method of inquiry will form the backbone of Peirce's unique brand of pragmatism and infiltrate every avenue of his thought. At base, as Buchler rightly notes:

For Peirce the idea of the public, the general, the communal, is of primary importance in sound philosophizing. It is reflected in all of his opinions: in his opposition to methodological individualism, and his social theories of truth, reality, knowledge and meaning...more specifically, it is the key to his conception of leading principles or habits in contrast to intuitive insight as the foundation of reasoning; in his conception of a scientific experiment as no isolated, self-contained process but as indissociable from a complex chain of verification.<sup>130</sup>

Peirce's primary critique was aimed at any method of grounding beliefs that lead to developmental stagnation. As Buchler notes, "most repugnant, perhaps, to Peirce's viewpoint is one that winks cynically at the idea of philosophical progress, abetting not a little what he has eloquently revealed to be a crime as profound as it is subtle, the obstruction of inquiry."<sup>131</sup> As Peirce said:

The validity of an inductive argument consists, then, in the fact that it pursues a method which, if duly persisted in, must, in the very nature of things, lead to a result indefinitely approximating to the truth in the long run ... so far as the truth is capable of being discovered, with an indefinite approximation to accuracy.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> De Waal, *On Pragmatism, Op. Cit.*, 16.

<sup>130</sup> Buchler, introduction to *Philosophical Writings of Peirce, Op. Cit.* xiv – xv.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, x - xi.

<sup>132</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 2.781.

As Buchler rightly concludes, if thought is always to some degree general, and always in this sense inferential and expective, this forms the very “heart of fallibilism.”<sup>133</sup> There is always a halo of indeterminacy, for Peirce, in every belief statement, for every belief is more than an isolated statement, pristine and unchanging, but always and ever “a habit of action,”<sup>134</sup> regulating future behavior in novel, untested situations. As such, indubitability and irrevisibility are chimeras, for Peirce. “All science, all significant inquiry is a web with indefinite frontiers”<sup>135</sup> and all inquiry aims to create stronger and more robust beliefs. As Rockmore notes, Peirce’s critique of Descartes on this matter is “crucial to the formulation of his own position” and ...

... is intended to show the disparity between his French predecessor’s enormously influential, but abstract theoretical approach to the problem of knowledge in general and the utterly different problem of understanding knowledge as it in fact arises in experience, especially within modern science.<sup>136</sup>

Though “Peirce and Descartes agree that inquiry is a struggle to attain a belief unassailable by doubt; they disagree, however, on the nature of doubt, what constitutes a reason for doubting, and the process of inquiry”<sup>137</sup> itself. In Smith’s exploration of Peirce’s anti-Cartesianism, he notes that there are “two main features”<sup>138</sup> which characterize Descartes’ position, both of which are rejected by Peirce and in their rejection is born a positive theory that Peirce would propose instead.

First, Descartes thought of the human mind as a power of grasping the meaning of a concept in a wholly intuitive way; secondly, he regarded the

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<sup>133</sup> Buchler, introduction to *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, *Op. Cit.*, xii.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> Tom Rockmore, “Hegel, Peirce, and Knowledge,” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, New Series, 13, no. 3 (1999): 166 – 184, 173.

<sup>137</sup> Lesley Friedman, “Doubt & Inquiry: Peirce and Descartes Revisited,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 35, no. 4 (Fall 1999): 724 – 746, 729.

<sup>138</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 6.

mind as self-contained in the sense that its peculiar circumstances – that it belongs to this person, or that it operates in this place at a certain time – do not in any way affect its operation.<sup>139</sup>

In rejecting both of these principles, Peirce forwarded a method of belief formation that, on the one hand, rejects any form of non-mediated intuiting, and, on the other hand, rejects the solipsistic claim that a single mind, in communal isolation, could ever hope to attain true beliefs about reality.<sup>140</sup> As Haack notes, “Peirce complains that Descartes makes the acquisition of knowledge an individual venture when really it is a community enterprise.”<sup>141</sup> Peirce offers three substantive reasons for rejecting the Cartesian possibility that knowledge can be achieved in isolation from the community, themes that will recur in greater detail throughout my investigation. First, Peirce “stresses the ways in which individuals learn from each other,”<sup>142</sup> a necessarily dialogical process between initially antagonistic beliefs held by different parties.<sup>143</sup> Second, Peirce “urges that the individual’s consciousness of himself is derived from interactions with others,”<sup>144</sup> leading to a type of hyperbolic social individualism, a radical intersubjectivity absent entirely from Descartes’ meditations. Third, “what the individual believes, according to Peirce, is linguistically expressed (‘all thought is in signs’), and language is essentially

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 – 7.

<sup>140</sup> “Man becomes an agent, and conduct becomes explicit and revealed to those others. No longer engaged in private reverie and alone with his thoughts and desires, the individual ventures in the wider setting of a community. As a participant in that joint enterprise, he assumes a public figure,” Idus Murphree, “Peirce’s Theory of Inquiry,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 56, no. 16 (July 1959): 667 – 678, 668.

<sup>141</sup> Susan Haack, “Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community” in “The Relevance of Charles Peirce – Part II,” special issue, *The Monist* 65, no. 2 (April 1982): 156 – 181, 172.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> “Descartes marks the period when Philosophy put off childish things and began to be conceited young man. By the time the young man has grown to be an old man, he will have learned that traditions are precious treasures, while iconoclastic inventions are always cheap and often nasty,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 4.71.

<sup>144</sup> Haack, “Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community,” *Op. Cit.*, 173.

public.”<sup>145</sup> These three articles will inform the bedrock of Peirce’s philosophy, all of which I will investigate throughout the course of the following chapters, and all stemming from his robust critique of Descartes’ methodology.

As De Waal notes, “instead of singling out specific ideas as absolutely certain and building his philosophy upon them, he begins with the beliefs we possess when we begin our inquiry.”<sup>146</sup> Thus, Peirce began with the lived experience of the inquirer him or herself and accused Descartes of “doubting things, in the safety of his study, such things as the existence of the material world, which he did not doubt when he went out on the street.”<sup>147</sup> What beliefs are already present, at a given moment, inform the content, trajectory and method of the inquiry involved. “Inquiry,” De Waal notes for Peirce, “always takes place against a backdrop of beliefs that are taken for granted.”<sup>148</sup> Indeed, for Peirce, it would be quite impossible to engage realistically in the sort of hyperbolic doubt that informed Descartes’ method. Every specific doubt is only ever engaged against a background of previous beliefs such that doubting all beliefs at once is quite impossible if we are earnest in our attempt. In part informed by a general sort of *gestalt* psychology (which would influence James’s pragmatism, as well), for Peirce a doubt is something specific, presenting itself as justifiably attention-worthy ever and only against an ongoing backdrop of precisely what is not attention-worthy at that moment, our ongoing stable beliefs. Although “doubt,” as we shall see, is an integral part of Peirce’s method of inquiry, it cannot be the ultimate foundation of the method itself.

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<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> De Waal, *On Pragmatism, Op. Cit.*, 11.

<sup>147</sup> Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy, Op. Cit.*, 122.

<sup>148</sup> De Waal, *On Pragmatism, Op. Cit.*, 11.

Contra a Cartesian method of hyperbolic doubt, Peirce maintained that we begin with what we already know, that is, with our current set of beliefs<sup>149</sup> and from there open a specific inquiry, designed to test some specific facet of our encountered world.<sup>150</sup> “The object of reasoning is to find out, from the consideration of what we already know, something else which we do not know.”<sup>151</sup> As Cooke notes, “it is impossible to begin inquiry without beliefs already in place because it is impossible not to have beliefs or habits of action at any point in time.”<sup>152</sup> Nagel, who notes, “in any inquiry we must plunge into medias res with all the beliefs and prejudices we actually have, and that we can not, even in principle, engage in a universal Cartesian skepticism”, further reflects this sentiment.<sup>153</sup> Bird gives us a concise articulation of the method of inquiry as it plays out:

We move from the notice of a wonderful phenomenon to make a startling conjecture and arrive at a plausible explanation by reasoning from consequent and antecedent by abduction; then set about collecting the consequences of the hypothesis, explicating it by deduction and drawing out its implications; and finally, by induction, ascertaining how far these consequents accord with experience, classifying, proving, and judging to what extent the hypothesis is borne out.<sup>154</sup>

As Peirce noted, in both traditional conceptions of rationalism and empiricism, “philosophers from diverse stripes propose that philosophy shall take its start from one or

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<sup>149</sup> As Mullin notes, “Peirce proposed that a philosophical investigation can begin from only one state of mind, namely, the state of mind in which we find ourselves when we begin.” Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 122.

<sup>150</sup> “We never break out of our conceptual schemes, or more broadly, our systems of signs and have direct immediate *cognitive* contact with reality...we could never know anything unless we already brought concepts to bear on what we encounter,” Richard Bernstein, “In Defense of American Philosophy,” in *Contemporary American Philosophy*, ed. John E. Smith (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), 295 – 296.

<sup>151</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, W3:244.

<sup>152</sup> Elizabeth Cooke, *Peirce’s Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 21.

<sup>153</sup> Nagel, “Charles S. Peirce, Pioneer of Modern Empiricism,” *Op. Cit.*, 77.

<sup>154</sup> Otto Bird, “Peirce’s Theory of Methodology,” *Philosophy of Science* 26, no. 3 (July 1959): 187-200, 197-198.

another state of mind in which no man, least of all a beginner of philosophy, actually is.”<sup>155</sup> Those of Descartes’ ilk propose, “that you shall begin by doubting everything, and...that there is only one thing that you cannot doubt, as if doubting were ‘as easy as lying.’”<sup>156</sup> And those of a Lockean camp propose, “that we should begin by observing ‘the first impressions of sense,’ forgetting that our very percepts are the results of cognitive elaboration.”<sup>157</sup> Rather (and this will inform Peirce’s own unique brand of phenomenology), “in truth, there is but one state of mind from which you can ‘set out,’ namely, the very state of mind in which you actually find yourself at the time you do ‘set out’ – a state in which you are laden with an immense mass of cognition already formed, of which you cannot divest yourself if you would.”<sup>158</sup>

However, it should be noted that this particular critique of Descartes might not be his strongest. Descartes famously notes in the first of his *Meditations* that “I have today suitably freed my mind of all cares, secured for myself a period of leisurely tranquility, and am withdrawing into solitude”<sup>159</sup> in order to “raze everything to the ground and begin again from the original foundations.”<sup>160</sup> Descartes even takes care to note his specific situatedness in saying that he is “sitting next to the fire” and wearing his “winter gown” while “holding this sheet of paper”<sup>161</sup> in his hands. In effect, Descartes is, indeed, setting out from a specific “state of mind” in which he finds himself, namely, a state of doubt as to the certitude of his beliefs and the efficacy of his senses. He notes, for example, that “yesterday’s meditation has thrown me into such doubts that I can no longer ignore

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<sup>155</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, EP 2:335 - 336.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 13.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

them...it is as if I had suddenly fallen into a deep whirlpool; I am so tossed about that I can neither touch bottom with my foot, nor swim up to the top.”<sup>162</sup> In this way, Peirce’s critique of Descartes may not be wholly fair since Descartes did, indeed, have a specific state of mind when his inquiry began. As Descartes says, “several years have now passed since I first realized how numerous were the false opinions that in my youth I had taken to be true.”<sup>163</sup> However, I believe the key aspect of Peirce’s critique lies at the end of the aforementioned passage, namely, that this “state of mind in which you actually find yourself at the time you do ‘set out’” is “a state in which you are laden with an immense mass of cognition already formed, of which you cannot divest yourself if you would.”<sup>164</sup> Descartes maintained it was possible to divest oneself of *all* of one’s beliefs in order to ascertain which, if any, could be considered indubitable enough to make a firm foundation upon which to build a robust and certain epistemology. It is to this, I maintain, more than anything else, that Peirce took exception, saying, instead, that a web of beliefs must always be in place as the necessary backdrop against which one engages a specific doubt through inquiry.

Further, Peirce seemed to voice a certain suspicion as to the authenticity of Descartes’ state of doubt at the time of his *Meditations*. “Do you call it doubting to write down on a piece of paper that you doubt? If so, doubt has nothing to do with any serious business.”<sup>165</sup> As Misak notes in her introduction to the *Cambridge Companion to Peirce*:

Peirce’s...critical commonsensism is a position about how we ought to regard those beliefs which are settled. It holds that there are many things which inquirers do not doubt and that inquiry must start with a background of beliefs which are not doubted. A body of settled belief is presupposed

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<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>164</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.* CP 5.416.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

for the operation of inquiry in that there has to be something settled for surprise to stir up.<sup>166</sup>

If Descartes' project is framed, as Misak says, as "a systematic attempt to bring into doubt all hypotheses about which error is conceivable,"<sup>167</sup> such doubts would be nothing more than, as Peirce might say, "paper" doubts.

They are not genuine and they cannot motivate inquiry. The mere possibility of being mistaken with respect to what one believes is never a reason to revise those beliefs. Any of our beliefs might be false, but it would be absurd to doubt them all because of this. If we did, we would not possess a body of stable belief by which to judge new evidence and hypotheses, and hence, we would block the path of inquiry. We can doubt one belief and inquire, but we cannot doubt all of our beliefs and inquire. Peirce's point against Descartes is that if we were to set the requirements on knowledge as high as Descartes does, we would have nothing left to go on.<sup>168</sup>

Thus, the Cartesian method blocks the path of inquiry and violates Peirce's most sacred mandate.

Rather than seeking infallible knowledge (a chimera for Peirce), we must begin, instead, with what we are: human beings with dispositions to react in one way or another to new stimuli based upon previous experience and a massive cognitive bank of beliefs operating as not only the backdrop against which a single belief may be doubted and investigated but, too, as the pool of resources from which we may draw forth the necessary cognitive apparatus for the act of inquiry to commence in the first place. As he said, "that which determines us, from given premises, to draw one inference rather than

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<sup>166</sup> Cheryl Misak, "Charles Sanders Peirce (1839 – 1914)," in *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce*, ed. Cheryl Misak. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 13.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*



another, is some habit of mind, whether it be constitutional or acquired.”<sup>169</sup> From the premises already within the individual, those beliefs or “habits of mind” influence which inference will be drawn upon the introduction of new stimuli. That is to say, whom that individual is in the moment of inquiry will determine, based on those preexisting beliefs, how that individual will act in the new situation:

The habit is good or otherwise, according as it produces true conclusions from true premises or not; and an inference is regarded as valid or not, without reference to the truth or falsity of its conclusion specially, but according as the habit which determines it as such as to produce true conclusions in general or not. The particular habit of mind which governs this or that inference may be formulated in a proposition whose truth depends on the validity of the inferences which the habit determines; and such a formula is called a *guiding principle* of inference.<sup>170</sup>

These beliefs, or habits of mind, are “guiding principles” in their ability to orient the direction of inquiry to produce either true or false conclusions and are judged, not by an impossibly high epistemological bar of absolute, timeless certainty, but through their efficacy to produce for the individual “true” conclusions which retroactively validate the initial premises (guiding principles).

From a sea of beliefs, a doubt “emerges” as a result of the onset of the problematic situation. This sea of beliefs represents the *background* necessary to focus upon what pops into the *foreground* (both must be present for either to exist at all),

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<sup>169</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, W3:245. Of importance here is the distinction between beliefs that are “constitutional or acquired” which Peirce glossed over in this passage. Peirce articulated four distinct methods of belief formation that I will discuss at length throughout this project. Three of these methods are counterproductive to the attainment of Truth in the long run and only one, his scientific method of inquiry, brings the inquirer closer to that proposed Truth. That is not to say that beliefs acquired via one of these counterproductive methods are false, necessarily, simply because their origins are dubious. An authority, for example, may proliferate beliefs external to any sort of rigorous scientific method of inquiry that prove, ultimately, to be quite true in the provisional sense Peirce is using the term, “true,” in this context. Peirce’s point is that these beliefs are not true *because* they are proliferated by an authority, they are true *and* they are proliferated by an authority. The ultimate test of a belief’s veracity will entail shifting the forum of its verification *from* one of these counterproductive methods *to* the only method that, according to Peirce, can legitimately verify said belief’s veracity: the scientific method of inquiry.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

allowing a close, careful analysis of the belief-in-doubt. It would be, for Peirce, literally impossible to doubt all of one's beliefs at once, for there would be no background against which scientific analysis even take place and no cognitive tools one could use to analyze beliefs-in-doubt in the first place. As Rockmore notes, "according to Peirce, who adopts a version of what we now call *holism*, we cannot doubt everything, since we are always already in the world, hence embedded in a web of belief."<sup>171</sup> Further, if the "sole object of inquiry is the settlement of opinion," it is clear that Peirce gives no credence to the call for complete, timeless epistemic certainty (as Descartes desired). As Rockmore notes, like Descartes, Peirce "has a method; but, unlike Descartes, his method is conceived not as a theory yielding absolute theoretical truth but rather as a theory yielding only the best results we can arrive at."<sup>172</sup> This, of course, was already clear from his inherently fallibilistic conception of human cognition and the necessary revisability of beliefs, in general.<sup>173</sup> This Peircean conception of the revisability of beliefs, contrary to a Cartesian demand for an apodictic foundation, is eloquently summarized by Sellars who notes, "for empirical knowledge, like its sophisticated extension, science, is rational, not because it has a *foundation* but because it is a self-correcting enterprise which can put *any* claim in jeopardy, though not *all* at once."<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Rockmore, "Hegel, Peirce, and Knowledge," *Op. Cit.*, 174.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>173</sup> All beliefs are revisable, though some have undergone the scientific method more rigorously which has, consequently, resulted in more stable (but never perfectly stable) beliefs. As Tom Rockmore notes, "belief is the state arrived at when doubt has provisionally (but not definitively, since nothing about knowledge is definitive) been left behind as the result of overcoming practical doubt as it really arises within the process of inquiry. Stable beliefs, which are sought in the process of inquiry, are or are comparable to the laws of science." *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>174</sup> Wilfrid Sellars, *Science, Perception and Reality* (New York: Humanities Press, 1963), 170.

Further, “that the settlement of opinion is the sole end of inquiry is a very important proposition. It sweeps away, at once, various vague and erroneous conceptions of proof.”<sup>175</sup>

Some philosophers have imagined that to start an inquiry it was only necessary to utter a question whether orally or by setting it down upon paper, and have even recommended us to begin our studies with questioning everything! But the mere putting of a proposition into the interrogative form does not stimulate the mind to any struggle after belief. There must be a real and living doubt and without this all discussion is idle.<sup>176</sup>

If the “irritation of doubt” is the motivating force, the impetus to inquiry, this doubt must therefore be “a real and living doubt” for the resultant “irritation” to take hold. The mere transforming of a proposition into a question does not suffice to stimulate sufficient doubt to get the engine of inquiry up and running. As Peirce said:

It is a very common idea that a demonstration must rest on some ultimate and absolutely indubitable propositions. These, according to one school, are first principles of a general nature; according to another, are first sensations. But, in point of fact, an inquiry, to have that completely satisfactory result called demonstration, has only to start with propositions perfectly free from all actual doubt. If the premises are not in fact doubted at all, they cannot be more satisfactory than they are.<sup>177</sup>

As a scientist,<sup>178</sup> Peirce attacked Descartes’ own conception of the scientific method that demands no communal verifiability (indeed, it is unclear to what degree we

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<sup>175</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, W3:248.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.* Further, “Peirce’s emphasis is fatal to the conception that science must be grounded upon an indubitable apprehension of simple elements, whether these be atomic-facts, sense-data, or essences, all pre-manufactured and neatly packaged; for it entails the view that alleged ‘simples’ must be contextually interpreted and that they are products of inquiry which has learned to isolate certain features of the environment as reliable clues to what is going on,” Nagel, “Charles S. Peirce, Pioneer of Modern Empiricism,” *Op. Cit.*, 76.

<sup>178</sup> As Rockmore, “Peirce is concerned with the logic of scientific inquiry as it actually occurs, hence scientific practice, or the practice of scientific inquiry, as distinguished from religious, artistic, or political

can know even the existence of other minds in the *Meditations*). Although Peirce attacked the “idle” transformation of propositions into interrogatives, is not the progress of science and knowledge based precisely upon the active problematizing of current beliefs so as to innovate and move into new arenas of knowledge? Was there not a time that the perfectly legitimate claim, “I cannot fly to the moon,” was transformed into the question “can I fly to the moon?” that expanded our knowledge and developed the sciences precisely because we actively problematized our beliefs without the living, “real” need to do so? Consider what Peirce said in his follow-up essay, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear”:

I have, for example, to wait in a railway-station, and to pass the time I read the advertisements on the walls. I compare the advantages of different trains and different routes which I never expect to take, merely fancying myself to be in a state of hesitancy, because I am bored with having nothing to trouble me. Feigned hesitancy, whether feigned for mere amusement or with a lofty purpose, plays a great part in the production of scientific inquiry. However the doubt may originate, it stimulates the mind to an activity which may be slight or energetic, calm or turbulent.<sup>179</sup>

Here, Peirce committed himself to the position that one can actively problematize one’s own beliefs, without a direct and immediate need to do so. But this is perfectly in keeping with his method of inquiry and in no way undermines his critique of Descartes.

In Descartes’ fourth meditation, he makes clear that to allow the will to outpace the intellect is the surest way to fall into error but, in so doing, does not make clear *how* our knowledge is meant to increase if we are limited only to what we already know clearly and distinctly. But the scientific method is based *precisely* on allowing the will to outpace the intellect, to imagine, to innovate, to *guess*: “let me say to the student, that if he wishes his thought about abstract subjects to get anywhere, and not merely spin on an

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practice, but not practice in genera, nor the analytic reconstruction of the scientific method now familiar in philosophy of science,” Rockmore, “Hegel, Peirce, and Knowledge,” *Op. Cit.*, 173.

<sup>179</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, W3:262.

immovable axis, he must let his fancy take wing, while he holds fast to the string by which he controls it.”<sup>180</sup> As Peirce said: “the truth is that the whole fabric of our knowledge is one matted felt of pure hypothesis confirmed and refined by induction. Not the smallest advance can be made in knowledge beyond the state of vacant staring, without making an abduction at every step.”<sup>181</sup> Creativity, imagination, and hypothesizing are *fundamental* aspects of the process of inquiry itself, of science itself, but not a whimsical, random doubt-for-doubt’s sake, but towards some specific goal, some specific doubt, while keeping the rest of our web of beliefs intact. Our knowledge grows by starting off with the beliefs we have and attempting to learn something *new*. This point may be further clarified by Royce and Kernan who note that as “knowledge grows toward perfection, the discrepancy between theory and fact grows less. That is simply because the better we know nature, the more we can discover how to adjust theory and fact, one to the other.”<sup>182</sup>

For Peirce, knowledge growth was a coordination of both the analyzing and postulating of goals for inquiry and the assessment of the means by which to achieve the goals desired. Instrumentalism, broadly construed and as Horkheimer defined it, focused solely on the latter at the expense of the former (where means were assessed solely to achieve ends prescribed by some socio-economic-political coordination external to the inquirer him or herself). But Peirce specifically separated the study of ethics (a foundation for logic in his normative sciences) from that of “practices.” “Practices,”<sup>183</sup> as

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<sup>180</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, R 413:264

<sup>181</sup> C.S. Peirce, MS 692, cited in Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 72.

<sup>182</sup> Royce and Kernan, “Charles Sanders Peirce,” *Op. Cit.*, 704.

<sup>183</sup> Peirce also referred to practices as “antethics.”

he called it, “is the theory of the conformity of action to an ideal,”<sup>184</sup> whereas “ethics...involves more than the theory of such conformity; namely, it involves the theory of the ideal itself, the nature of the *summum bonum*.”<sup>185</sup> Precisely because Horkheimer was dismissive of Peirce’s Kantian heritage,<sup>186</sup> he failed to appreciate this Kantian strain in Peirce’s thought.<sup>187</sup> Even the name “pragmatism” is derived from a Kantian distinction between “*praktisch* and *pragmatisch*,”<sup>188</sup> which “were as far apart as the two poles, the former belonging in a region of thought where no mind of the experimentalist type can ever make sure of solid ground under his feet, the latter expressing relation to some definite human purpose.”<sup>189</sup> Peirce distanced himself from the common charge against pragmatism that it was a wholly “practical” affair, desiring “practical” effects without so much as a constitutive theory in sight. By co-opting this Kantian distinction, the “*pragmatic*” became “virtually synonymous with the *purposeful*, where the purposeful is not bound to selfish ends, but consists in an intersubjective and general process that makes signs grow in a social undertaking” devoid of “any utilitarian

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<sup>184</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.573.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> “If it were not for the founder of the school, Charles S. Peirce, who has told us that he ‘learned philosophy out of Kant,’ one might be tempted to deny any philosophical pedigree to a doctrine that holds not that our expectations are fulfilled and our actions successful because our ideas are true, but rather that our ideas are true because our expectations are fulfilled and our actions successful. Indeed, it would be doing Kant an injustice to make him responsible for this development. He made scientific insight dependent upon transcendental, not upon empirical functions. He did not liquidate truth by identifying it with the practical actions of verification, nor by teaching that meaning and effect are identical,” Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 29.

<sup>187</sup> Habermas, undoubtedly inspired by his friend and colleague Karl-Otto Apel’s Kantian reading of Peirce, was far more alive to Peirce’s nascent Kantianism.

<sup>188</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.412.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

view of purposes.”<sup>190</sup> Ethics, for Peirce, was more than just practical activity; it was the *creation* of ideals in the long run, a “*summum bonum*.”<sup>191</sup>

“*Purposefulness*” is the “orientation toward an end involved in a thought process, distinguishing it from the more specific concept of *purposiveness*” which is “conformity to an end.”<sup>192</sup> It was Peirce’s use of “purposefulness” that is central to his ethics and distances him from the charge of instrumentalism. “From Kant, Peirce inherited the ideal of human reason holding itself accountable in a strict, severe sense not only for its claims about reality but also for its ideals, goals, and purposes.”<sup>193</sup>

Abduction and induction are the means by which thought grows. Abduction “can introduce a new idea, or use a past idea in a new context”<sup>194</sup> and “makes its start from the facts, without, at the outset, having any particular theory in view, though it is motivated by the feeling that a theory is needed to explain the surprising facts.”<sup>195</sup> Both abduction *and* induction “lead to the acceptance of a hypothesis because observed facts are such as would necessarily or probably result as consequences of that hypothesis.”<sup>196</sup> Whereas abduction makes it start from the facts, “induction makes its start from a hypothesis which seems to recommend itself, without at the outset having any particular facts in view, though it feels the need of facts to support the theory”<sup>197</sup> and thus “suggests the

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<sup>190</sup> Gabriele Gava, “The Purposefulness of Our Thought: A Kantian Aid to Understanding Some Essential Features of Peirce,” in “A Symposium on James Good’s ‘A Search for Unity in Diversity,’ special issue, *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 44, no. 4, (Fall 2008): 699 – 727, 700.

<sup>191</sup> “The pragmatist does not make the *summum bonum* to consist in action, but makes it to consist in that process of evolution whereby the existent comes more and more to embody those generals which were just now said to be destined, which is what we strive to express in calling them reasonable,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.433.

<sup>192</sup> Gava, “The Purposefulness of Our Thought: A Kantian Aid to Understanding Some Essential Features of Peirce,” *Op. Cit.*, 700.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 701.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 706.

<sup>195</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.218.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

experiments which bring to light the very facts to which the hypothesis had pointed.”<sup>198</sup> Abduction takes the disparate facts of experience and seeks a unifying theory to make sense of those experiences in a larger context. Induction takes the theory generated by abduction and seeks to find facts that correlate with the hypothesis suggested. As such, *abduction* (“motivated by the feeling that a theory is needed to explain the surprising facts”)<sup>199</sup> correlates with *Practics* (“the theory of the conformity of action to an ideal”<sup>200</sup>) and with *purposiveness* (“conformity to an end.”<sup>201</sup>). *Induction* (which “makes its start from a hypothesis...without at the outset having any particular facts in view”)<sup>202</sup> correlates with *Ethics* (“involves the theory of the ideal itself, the nature of the *summum bonum*”<sup>203</sup>) and with *purposefulness* (“orientation toward an end involved in a thought process”<sup>204</sup>). The coordination of abduction and induction, *Practics* and *Ethics*, *purposiveness* and *purposefulness*, is integral to Peirce’s method of inquiry as it provides us with an *end* (vague and indeterminate as it may be) as well as a *means* to get there.

Of course, the *source* of doubt (the problem we must engage in inquiry) sometimes forces itself upon us involuntarily. This would be a kind of *reactivity* to environmental circumstances and we, organisms in transaction with it, must respond in kind to reestablish our homeostatic equilibrium. As Cooke notes,

We see that the environment affects what is investigated, unlike Descartes’ model of inquiry which is solely a matter for the will of the individual. The environment, including its social and natural aspects, influences what the individual sees or experiences as doubt. The irritation

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<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.573.

<sup>201</sup> Gava, “The Purposefulness of Our Thought: A Kantian Aid to Understanding Some Essential Features of Peirce,” *Op. Cit.*, 700.

<sup>202</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.573.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> Gava, “The Purposefulness of Our Thought: A Kantian Aid to Understanding Some Essential Features of Peirce,” *Op. Cit.*, 700.



of doubt is caused by a ‘brute shock’ (what Peirce later calls ‘Secondness’) from the environment...in this model, inquiry is a dynamic interplay between organism and environment.<sup>205</sup>

However, with Peirce’s emphasis on the creative hypothesizing of abduction and the inductive process that leads us from what we already know to what we do not yet know (but have hazarded a controlled, reasonable guess by hanging tight to the wire that lets our imagination take wing), likewise allowed him to focus on a *proactive* form of inquiry, as well. For example, Peirce said:

We imagine ourselves in various situations and animated by various motives; and we proceed to trace out the alternative lines of conduct which the conjectures would leave open to us. We are, moreover, led, by the same inward activity, to remark different ways in which our conjectures could be slightly modified. The logical interpretent must, therefore, be in a relatively future tense.<sup>206</sup>

There are shades of this “being” in a relatively “future tense” embedded within his definition of “belief” which, as a guiding principle or premise, comes laden with future expectations as to the results of inquiries that have not yet been made. The very nature of abduction (hypothesis) is creative, imaginative, and future oriented, postulating the “might be’s” prior to the inductive process of discovering the veracity of those initial speculations. We see here that rather than awaiting a problematic situation to assault us from the outside, Peirce articulated the common occurrence wherein we hypothetically postulate, through an act of imagination, various potential outcomes, “conjectures,” open to a future of varying possibilities. This imaginative process is not in the least merely reactive but, indeed, proactively problematizes beliefs by imagining myriad alternative possible outcomes, each of which may be tested to gain more knowledge about the world,

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<sup>205</sup> Cooke, *Peirce’s Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, *Op. Cit.*, 22.

<sup>206</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.481.

knowledge that would not have otherwise been readily available if the inquirer was only ever waiting to encounter problems and *react* accordingly. Kent, for example, in comparing Peirce with Einstein, notes, “both maintained that inquiry advances in reaction to experiences that conflict with established thought patterns and, in doing so, create surprise or wonder.”<sup>207</sup> Doubt *is* also “wonder” and “surprise,” something that should only *ideally* be negated over the long run of inquiry but, practically, in the here and now, wonder is the engine for inquiry and cognitive development and must, on this model, be embraced. But the source of this “reaction to experiences that conflict with established thought patterns” may be external *or* internal, that is, may be the result of something happening *to* the inquiring organism *or* the active problematizing of some belief *by* the inquiring organism. Further, reactivity alone limits the potential growth of knowledge (Peirce rejects any form of limitation on inquiry according to his first rule of reason) because the *how* and *when* of the problem is dictated from without whereas in a proactive stance towards the scientific method, the inquirer has the power to *determine* the terms of the inquiry, and is not merely a victim *of* them.

Peirce noted that the inquirer may make “in his imagination a sort of skeleton diagram, or outline sketch” considering “what modifications the hypothetical state of things would require to be made in that picture, and then examines it, that is *observes* what he has imagined” not of what “*is*” the case but of “what *would be*.”<sup>208</sup> In terms of the growth of knowledge, of the three modes of logical notation, “abduction,” as Peirce

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<sup>207</sup> Beverley Kent, *Charles S. Peirce: Logic and the Classification of Science* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1987), 3.

<sup>208</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP2.227. Further, as Kent notes, “beginning with a suggestion from Berkeley’s work on vision, Peirce conceived the possibility of forming habits from imaginary practice...He claimed that by exercising the imagination, we can visualize the occurrence of a stimulus and mentally rehearse the results of different responses. That which appears most satisfactory will influence actual behavior as effectively as as a habit produced by reiteration in the outside world,” Kent, *Charles S. Peirce: Logic and the Classification of Science, Op. Cit.*, 4.

defined it, is geared almost specifically to this form of “active” pragmatism. As he noted, “deduction proves that something *must* be; induction shows that something *actually is* operative; abduction merely suggests that something *may be*.”<sup>209</sup> Indeed, it is the coordination of all three modes, with abduction taking the lead, that makes the growth of knowledge possible: “its [i.e., abduction’s] only justification is that from its suggestion deduction can draw a prediction which can be tested by induction, and that, if we are ever to learn anything or to understand phenomena at all, it must be by abduction that this is to be brought about.”<sup>210</sup> As Brent notes, central to Peirce’s method of inquiry, is that it *must* “risk” a guess, that is, a “hypothetical inference,” as the “first step toward knowledge, a step always subject to inductive test by the community of inquiry.”<sup>211</sup>

Smith was likewise aware of this phenomenon in Peirce and makes an interesting study on the subject. He notes,

Peirce...was aware that the enterprise of natural science was not born of genuine doubt in his sense at all. We did not, that is, wait until there arose in the natural course of events the sort of vital, deeply felt struggle which is characteristic of genuine doubt. Science requires a large dose of *feigned* doubt and hesitancy; it depends, in short, on running ahead of our genuine doubts, on making and tracing out the supposition that some former belief or theory *might* be mistaken and in asking ‘theoretical’ questions for the purpose of trying out the possibilities.<sup>212</sup>

Without question, science is often *reactive* in the sense we articulated above, namely, that it is only after problems emerge from the environment is it instigated to inquiry to seek a resolution. A new strain of virus, for example, could emerge quite suddenly in response to some mutation and medicine will need to seek a new, stronger treatment to contain and

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<sup>209</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.171.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>211</sup> Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, xiv.

<sup>212</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 19.

combat it. However, science is also *active* or *proactive* in its striving towards innovation and development, not waiting for “external” factors to determine its course of action. There is always a *human* element in Peirce’s pragmatism, unlike Descartes’, whose apodictic certainty is aimed at a disinterested sort of theoretical knowledge that provided the impetus for feigned doubt as a method for determining the nature of knowledge and what (if anything) of the external world we can know for certain. As Smith notes,

Quantum mechanics may demand doubts about universal causality, but it is not likely that individual scientists harbor genuine doubt as to whether they will fall to the bottom of an elevator shaft should they have the misfortune to fall into one through an open door. They may muster doubts about almost anything under the forced draft of the scientific enterprise; this does not mean that they, as individual persons, actually have genuine doubts about these things.<sup>213</sup>

In contrast to Descartes’ method, Peirce’s scientific method (which we will explore in full) was a method of *inquiry*, not a method of *doubt*. For Peirce, doubt was neither the method used nor was it sustained throughout the process, but retained its critical, albeit *partial*, role in the method of inquiry.

In sum, against the skeptic, Peirce claimed that we *do* have knowledge, though never perfect certainty that any *one* of our beliefs is beyond revision given new information somewhere down the line. Against the dogmatist, Peirce claimed that apodictic certainty is chimerical given the fallible nature of inquiry, but that does not mean we do not know, only that we do not know for certain, which is not only an acceptable proposition for Peirce but a *necessary* one if we are to progress in inquiry at all. Peirce’s persistent fallibilism placed Truth as a goal-not-yet-achieved and only hypothetically, that is *ideally* achievable, guiding inquiry and forming regularities out of

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<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

chaos and chance, but was ever only approximated asymptotically.<sup>214</sup> As Myers notes, “the Peircean view [is] that unending inquiry approaches the truth asymptotically in a way analogous to the calculation of  $\pi$  where error,”<sup>215</sup> in Peirce’s words, “will indefinitely diminish as the calculation is carried to more and more places of decimals. What we call  $\pi$  is an ideal limit to which no numerical expression can be perfectly true.”<sup>216</sup> Thus, “the pragmatic definition more carefully worded states that the real is the ideal limit toward which indefinitely prolonged inquiry approaches asymptotically.”<sup>217</sup> As Peirce said, “at present, the course of events is approximately determined by law. In the past that approximation was less perfect: in the future it will be more perfect. The tendency to obey laws has always been and always will be growing.”<sup>218</sup> Claiming to know that  $\pi$  is “3.141” is both an indication we have knowledge (vs. the skeptic) but that that knowledge is as yet incomplete (vs. the dogmatist). As I inquire further, hypothetically guessing that there’s yet one more decimal point to fill in and inductively finding it, I discover that  $\pi$  is now “3.1415.” My knowledge has grown and grown closer to the ideal limit of absolute knowledge which, for  $\pi$ , with its infinite number of decimal places, will only *ever* be approximated and never wholly achieved. But, along the way,

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<sup>214</sup> “Truth is that concordance of an abstract statement with the ideal limit towards which endless investigation would tend to bring scientific belief, which concordance the abstract statement may possess by virtue of the confession of its inaccuracy and oneness, and this confession is an essential ingredient of truth,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.565. Although it is unclear what Peirce ultimately meant by the attainability of “truth,” in accord with his rejection of apodictic certainty, his first rule of logic, and his fallibilism, I firmly believe “truth” is an “ideal limit” of inquiry, never fully achieved, for inquiry, itself, can never be fully exhausted. As such, though we may have beliefs that do not need to be refined (if no counter-evidence ever be presented), we can only ever have *evidence* to suggest we have achieved that truth at the end of the long run of inquiry but never certainty that we have done so. To claim we have, at last, achieved absolute certainty would be antithetical to Peirce’s doctrine of fallibilism and inquiry.

<sup>215</sup> C. Mason Myers, “Peirce and the Concept of Reality,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 44, no. 1 (Sep. 1983): 95 – 101, 97.

<sup>216</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.565.

<sup>217</sup> C. Mason Myers, “Peirce and the Concept of Reality,” *Op. Cit.*, 97.

<sup>218</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.565.

that does not make our inquiries “wrong” to conclude that  $\pi$  *really is* “3.14159265359,” etc., nor do we lack knowledge *of*  $\pi$ .

It might appear, at first glance, that so worded, Peirce was conflating the *criteria* of Truth with Truth, itself. This is a valid concern, one that Habermas expressed in *Knowledge and Human Interests* that I address towards the conclusion of this project. Suffice it to say for now, however, that if a response could be given to such a charge, it would seem to involve the distinction that Peirce made between “true beliefs” and “Truth,” as I’ve hinted at above. Although it is the case that, for Peirce, beliefs are considered “true” if the guiding principles inherent in the beliefs lead to the conclusions they anticipate, this verifies and validates those beliefs *only* in the here and now. As Peirce insisted, with the infinite multiplicity of potential future transactions between inquirers and between inquirers and their nested social and natural environments, any one of our current beliefs may be proven false or, at least, in need of further refinement with the introduction of new information. This was the heart of his fallibilism. But unlike the skeptic, who claims that certainty is *a priori* impossible and, consequently, we can never claim to have knowledge if knowledge *requires* certainty, Peirce maintained that at the ideal end of inquiry, all investigations will terminate in a “destined” conclusion, one shared by all who inquire, an ultimate, irrevisable, apodictic Truth. The verificationism of the “true beliefs” in the here and now is ever only provisional, fallible, and though we *may* never encounter a problem that would require their reevaluation, nevertheless, we must hold *all* such beliefs as fallible and potential revisable, given the infinite nature of inquiry itself. Any one of our current “true beliefs” may well be already beyond future revision, but such adjudication must be postponed, for Peirce, perhaps indefinitely so as

never to close off potential avenues of further inquiry. Peirce had no definite proof that such a conception of Truth existed, but clues, at least, in the form of increasing consensus over time, our beliefs increasing efficacy to predict future results from inquiries not yet performed, combined with a quasi-heuristic component to the theory insofar as postponing, indefinitely, such finality as Truth and allocating it to the end of a potentially infinite “long run,” we construct no blockades for further inquiry, the heart of his “first rule of reason.”

As Anderson notes, the method of inquiry “did not lead directly and unerringly to the truth. [Peirce] did indeed understand the method as self-correcting, but the process of correction was always ongoing. Human inquirers, and the community they constitute, are fallible.”<sup>219</sup> To what degree, however, was Peirce’s commitment to fallibilism any more than the kind of blind dogmatism that he critiqued in the *a priori* method adopted by the likes of Descartes and Locke? *Must* every belief be fallible and without exception? As we’ve seen, fallibilism is *not* skepticism: Peirce maintained that doubt was not the obstacle to Truth but the impetus for its attainment, and that, though Truth will never be wholly attained, the greater degrees of its approximation do grant us knowledge about our encountered world. However, in one sense, Peirce’s fallibilism runs into a similar problem that ancient skepticism engaged, namely, if we claim to know nothing, how can that claim, itself, not be open to the same skepticism we are dedicated to? Isn’t the claim “we can never have knowledge” a knowledge claim itself? In terms of Peirce’s fallibilism, if he was dedicated to it wholly, would not the claim “all our knowledge is fallible” be, itself, a fallible claim, opening the possibility that fallibilism, itself, is

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<sup>219</sup> Douglas R. Anderson, *Strands of System: The Philosophy of Charles Peirce* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1995), 54.

fallible, and apodictic certainty, the kind that Peirce admonished throughout his career, was, indeed, attainable? Peirce admitted as much:

Only once, as far as I remember, in all my lifetime have I experienced the pleasure of praise – not for what it might bring but in itself. That pleasure was beatific; and the praise that conferred it was meant for blame. It was that a critic said of me that I did not seem to be *absolutely sure of my own conclusions*.<sup>220</sup>

In a way, Peirce's fallibilism was, in fact, dogmatic, or, better still, a kind of anti-dogmatic dogmatism, relying primarily on his observations that previously "certain" beliefs have been disrupted in the long run of history's unfolding as new information arose, forcing revisions to even the most apparently apodictic claims, leading to the belief that this pattern would continue *ad infinitum* towards what is only a heuristically assumed "Truth" lying at the far end of the road. As Hookway notes, "it is a regulative hope adopted when we undertake inquiries in the Normative Sciences, that we can accept the results of phenomenological reflection as having a form of objective validity."<sup>221</sup> According to Anderson, "this strategy is linked to Peirce's fallibilism and his willingness to postpone 'certainty' indefinitely."<sup>222</sup>

If we have no transcendental guarantee that knowledge of reality is possible, then, Peirce thinks, at least we have the best of grounds for *hoping* that our cognitive strategies will put us into contact with noumenal reality. Of course, this is not left as just a blind hope: metaphysics, the bridge between the normative sciences and the special sciences, has the task of constructing a plausible account of man and his place in nature which both accords with the discoveries of the special sciences and shows how the regulative hopes of the logician can be true.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.10.

<sup>221</sup> Christopher Hookway, *Peirce* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 109.

<sup>222</sup> Anderson, *Strands of System: The Philosophy of Charles Peirce*, *Op. Cit.*, 29.

<sup>223</sup> Hookway, *Peirce*, *Op. Cit.*, 115.



Fallibilism, itself, becomes a type of regulative principle. As Margolis notes, “remember: fallibilism is itself an abductive conjecture – in effect, a regulative optimism – presented as yielding an open-ended realism answering to what Peirce takes to be the work of a universal phenomenological instinct of inquiry!”<sup>224</sup> Wishing to avoid the skeptical problematic that “if it is in our nature to know nothing, there is no need to inquire any further into other things,”<sup>225</sup> both absolute skepticism *as well as* absolute certainty negate the need for further inquiry, the cardinal sin according to Peirce’s “first rule of reason.” Accordingly, Peirce took fallibilism as the middle-ground between the two opposing poles, each negating the need for further inquiry, operating as a regulative principle to compel inquiry’s perpetuation, akin to a Socratic definition of “wisdom” as a conscientiousness that one’s current knowledge is limited and, thus, one must strive to learn *more*.<sup>226</sup> As Peirce said:

My book will have no instruction to impart to anybody. Like a mathematical treatise, it will suggest certain ideas and certain reasons for holding them true; but then, if you accept them, it must be because you like my reasons, and the responsibility lies with you...my book is meant for people who *want to find out*; and people who want philosophy ladled out to them can go elsewhere. There are philosophical soup shops at every corner, thank God!<sup>227</sup>

And just like Socrates’ iconic dictum that wisdom is the appreciation of one’s current limits of knowledge, a recognition that results in the impetus to instigate further inquiry and not languish in the security of false, but comfortable, beliefs, Peirce collected his ...

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<sup>224</sup> Joseph Margolis, “Rethinking Peirce’s Fallibilism,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 43, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 229 – 249, 239.

<sup>225</sup> Aristocles in Eusebius, trans. Richard Bett, in Bett, *Pyrrho, His Antecedents, and His Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), PE 14.18.1.

<sup>226</sup> See Plato’s “Apology.”

<sup>227</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.11.

... ideas under the designation *fallibilism*; and indeed the first step toward *finding out* is to acknowledge you do not satisfactorily know already; so that no blight can so surely arrest all intellectual growth as the blight of cocksureness; and ninety-nine out of every hundred good heads are reduced to impotence by that malady – of whose inroads they are most strangely unaware!<sup>228</sup>

As I'll demonstrate, Peirce explored four distinct methods of belief formation, three of which were perennially counterproductive to ascertaining the Truth, and each of those three, in one way or another, succumbed to a form of dogmatism that blocked the road of inquiry, hence the need for a fallibilistic model instead.

What, then, *is* "Truth," for Peirce? Now, Peirce's pragmatism was dissimilar enough from James' adaptation that Peirce decided to rename his theory "pragmaticism," "a term that he describes as so ugly it would remain safe from those who kidnapped 'pragmatism'."<sup>229</sup> James "made pragmatism...a theory of knowledge and truth"<sup>230</sup> whereas Peirce was more concerned with the clarification of ideas in the context of their use in guiding and refining inquiry towards conclusions that proved "true" in so far as the conclusions postulated followed from the premises assumed in such a fashion as to validate both the one and the other.<sup>231</sup> In other words, a belief is "true" in so far as this

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<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.13.

<sup>229</sup> Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 125.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> As Peirce notes, "at present, the word begins to be met with occasionally in the literary journals, where it gets abused in the merciless way that words have to expect when they fall into literary clutches...to express some meaning that it was rather designed to exclude. So then, the writer, finding his bantling "pragmatism" so promoted, feels that it is time to kiss his child good-by and relinquish it to its higher destiny; while to serve the precise purpose of expressing the original definition, he begs to announce the birth of the word 'pragmaticism,' which is ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers," Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.414.

belief, this “premise” or “guiding principle,” leads the inquirer to the expected conclusion of that premise and not somewhere else.<sup>232</sup>

Peirce, as I will show throughout the course of this investigation, was critical of any philosophy that eschewed the significance of objectivity and intersubjectivity whereas James appeared to want to reduce Peirce’s insights into inquiry to the practical effects it has for the inquirer in isolation from the greater community. As Dooley notes, for example, “James amended Peirce’s position (that ideas mean general rules for conduct) to his own stand that meanings can be reduced to a particular consequence.”<sup>233</sup> Further, James put a greater “stress on individuality” rather than, as we’ll see in Peirce, “a *community* of inquirers.”<sup>234</sup> As Feibleman summarizes:

Peirce was concerned with the practicality of consequences to bear out intellectual concepts, but...James was more concerned with *particularity* of consequences...James’ outlook is that of the nominalistic psychologist; Peirce’s that of the realistic logician. James was concerned chiefly with

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<sup>232</sup> This definition of a “true belief” seems quite circular: if there is some conclusion, x, we expect prior to investigation, y, then the initial belief would seem to both already contain conclusion x and be seeking it at the same time. In a sense, this is quite true for Peirce, and may well be born out in investigation y, for not all investigations will result in a complete transmogrification of the initial belief. However, even though an initial belief may not be radically transformed after an investigation that corroborates it, nevertheless, that belief *has* changed, at least insofar as it has now incorporated a new data set (via this new investigation) into the belief itself, thereby strengthening it further. Nevertheless, this type of circularity is potentially problematic insofar as an individual may have some belief containing some expected conclusion x and engage in some experiment y that will be tainted, from the outset, by the nascent expected conclusions in the belief itself. That is to say, by this formula, the inquirer may lose objectivity in expecting a certain outcome prior to inquiry itself. As I will demonstrate shortly, the *communal* component of the method of inquiry (rather than, say, the method of tenacity) will offer a corrective for this problem by shifting the forum of inquiry into a wider context where not only are distinct beliefs brought into tension with one another from different inquirers but, too, different inquirers conducting different experiments who all hold the same initial belief will be brought into tension, as well. Although such a corrective does not negate the possibility that such experimental biases will continue, for Peirce, given the long run of inquiry’s unfolding, in time such idiosyncracies, he expected, would be weeded out as the final conclusion is reached not by any *one* inquirer, but by *all* inquiries engaged in testing a specific belief. Yet, even in the most straightforward kind of deductive analysis, though conclusions may be *anticipated* as nascent in any belief operating as a guiding principle, those conclusions are not determined, *a priori*, as absolutely certain to play out. As Peirce noted, for example, though some beliefs may contain premises that “produce true conclusions in the majority of cases, in the long run of experience,” that “conclusion” is not absolutely “certain” in any specific case (Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 2.268).

<sup>233</sup> Patrick Kieran Dooley, *Pragmatism as Humanism: the Philosophy of William James* (Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1975), 119.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

the effect of thoughts on the individual and his particular acts; Peirce was concerned chiefly with the clarification of ideas.<sup>235</sup>

Nevertheless, Peirce did, indeed, have a theory of Truth, if only as a consequence of his maxim for the clarification of ideas and a terminus (or regulatory principle) for his method of inquiry. For Peirce, two manifestations of “T/truth” may be discerned in his writing: first, the distinction between a “true belief” and a “false belief” and, second, “Truth” as the end goal of all inquiry.<sup>236</sup> As Mullin notes:

We call a belief true if the action that it produces leads us to what we expect in reality. The scientific method serves to distinguish true from false beliefs. Peirce believed that if scientific research were pushed far enough on any problem, it would yield a solution on which all investigators would agree. He defined truth as the opinion on which all investigators are destined to agree. The object of that opinion is reality.<sup>237</sup>

Misak further clarifies this distinction in noting:

Peirce puts the distinction in another way, too, namely, that ‘Absolute truth’ is the settled belief of the ultimate community of inquirers, and ‘indubitable propositions’ are the settled opinions of inquirers here and now. No individual can be absolutely certain with respect to any hypothesis, as she does not have the verdict of the ‘final’ scientific

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<sup>235</sup> Feibleman, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Charles S. Peirce: Interpreted as a System Op. Cit.*, 303 – 304.

<sup>236</sup> It should be noted that Peirce was not always consistent in making this distinction, his language in discussing “truth” would oscillate between the definition that correlates with beliefs leading from guiding premises to expected conclusions and the hypothetical terminus at the end of inquiry. Like his use of the term “Reality” (sometimes sounding like “Secondness,” at other times, “Thirdness”) Peirce granted us no favors in deciphering his meaning as to these critical terms. Nevertheless, through a close analysis of “Fixation of Belief,” his conception of “true beliefs” is distinct from his conception of Truth: the former are fallible, revisable, and the product of current inquiries in the here and now, the latter is a state of complete agreement and certainty, ideal and lying in wait, only hypothetically, at the end of a potentially endless long run of inquiry. Haack makes an interesting study on this topic in comparing Peirce with James, noting: “there is a difference of emphasis which it is important to consider. Peirce is preoccupied with the Truth, that is, the totality of individual truths. James, by contrast, is primarily interested in the individual truths, finding the Truth with a capital T a somewhat spectral and uninteresting abstraction... This emphasis on the growth of truth can be understood as a consequence of James's switch of Peirce's emphasis on the totality of truths in the long run to an emphasis on individual truths in the short run. This difference of emphasis can probably be traced in its turn to the contrast between Peirce's realism and James's nominalism: Peirce did not share James's antipathy for abstractions,” Haack, “The Pragmatist Theory of Truth,” *Op. Cit.*, 234 – 235.

<sup>237</sup> Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy, Op. Cit.*, 123.

community. Since there is no assurance that this final opinion will ever be reached, human knowledge is fallible. All we have is rational belief; the best belief given the available evidence.<sup>238</sup>

“Truth,” in this nuanced sense, as I’ll explore in full throughout this investigation, is the province of the *whole* community of inquirers whereas a “true belief,” qualified as that which is the best we have with our current set of evidence, is fallible in so far as it is ever open to revision upon the presentation of new, contradictory information, but acceptable in the here and now in so far as this belief, as a “guiding principle,” leads uproblematically to the conclusions expected. Unlike Descartes’ method that results in a single individual determining the “Truth” independently of anyone else’s verification, Peirce’s method *demand*s public verification, adding in a social component notoriously lacking in Descartes’ *Meditations*. If there could be an ultimate “Truth,” for Peirce, it would be the nature of reality towards which all investigators, employing Peirce’s scientific method of inquiry, would all arrive at and could communally verify, in what Peirce called “the long run.” As he said, “a real object is that which will be represented in the ultimate opinion about it. This implies that a series of opinions succeed one another, and that it is hoped that they may ultimately tend more and more towards some limiting opinion, even if they do not reach and rest in a last opinion.”<sup>239</sup> Some commentators have leapt immediately, upon reading this passage and numerous others, that Peirce must therefore be a kind of metaphysical realist wherein there is a mind-independent world with a determinate nature of its own and our flawed and fallible opinions about it are closer and closer approximating it until, at last, there will be a perfect “correspondence”

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<sup>238</sup> Cheryl Misak, “Peirce, Levi, and the Aims of Inquiry,” *Philosophy of Science* 54, no. 2 (June 1987): 356 – 265, 260.

<sup>239</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.609.

between this ultimate opinion (shared by all who inquire) and mind-independent reality.<sup>240</sup> Others, however, take the complete *opposite* reading: whatever the ultimate opinion happens to *be*, *that* will determine what things actually *are*. That is to say, that Peirce was an idealist who maintained a “consensus” theory of Truth wherein consensus (forged of inquiry) dictated what the world actually *is* rather than a mind-independent world transacting with inquirers to *create* consensus.

This is, by far, the thorniest aspect of Peirce’s philosophy. Indeed, even among the cream of Peirce scholars there is (ironically?) no consensus as to ultimate metaphysical commitments. However, the best *guess* at the riddle of Peirce’s metaphysical commitments must observe that (a), they changed over time so we must take care *when* Peirce said *what*, but, ultimately, that (b), Peirce was committed to a *type* of realism (there is *a* component of externality in Peirce’s phenomenology and method of inquiry) while concurrently committing himself to a *type* of idealism wherein reality is *constructed* through inquiry at least as much as it is *discovered*. Like the method of inquiry itself, as I will demonstrate, Peirce began with the beliefs we already have, in Peirce’s case, drawing from a pool of great minds as diverse as Aristotle, Scotus, Hegel, Berkeley, and Kant, to move *forward* and offer something wholly unique that defies easy characterization and eschews any attempt at a quick-and-easy label. But as I attempt to reconcile Peircean pragmatism with German critical theory, it is important to explain what, precisely, “reality” was for Peirce, specifically, to what degree can reality be *constructed* (a process easily coopted by the types of socio-political and economic interests that the Frankfurt School critiqued) and to what degree reality is *discovered*, that

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<sup>240</sup> Susan Haack, for example, who notes that Reality is “independent of our beliefs about it” for Peirce and that, for Peirce (and James, alike), “truth is correspondence” with that mind-independent reality. Haack, “The Pragmatist Theory of Truth,” *Op. Cit.*, p. 233.

is, to what degree is there something over and beyond the control of *any* socio-political power, beyond *any* indoctrination and belief-manipulation, a source, perhaps, of hope, freedom, and autonomy untouched and unscathed by even the most insidious of socio-political interests.

## Chapter 2

### Realism, Idealism, and Phenomenology

Peirce seemed, at first glance, to suffer “from a kind of philosophical schizophrenia, which led him to hold two distinct positions with no connecting doctrines between them.”<sup>241</sup> At once, Peirce seemed to be a *kind* of idealist as well as a *kind* of metaphysical realist.<sup>242</sup> On the one hand, his method of inquiry appeared to lead inquiry towards an “ultimate opinion” which we are *destined* to reach if we pursue this method over the long run, and that what this ultimate opinion represents is Reality. As such, there is the scent of metaphysical realism in the air, the conviction that our inquiries are leading up to a perfect “correspondence” with a mind-independent Reality that is *discovered* not constructed. On the other hand, many passages seemed to indicate that what this “ultimate opinion” ends up *being* will *determine* Reality, leading to a kind of idealism wherein Reality is *constructed* rather than discovered, and “Truth” is this ultimate “consensus” that *determines* Reality.

It is my contention that Peirce was neither wholly the one nor the wholly the other (nor was he “schizophrenic”). As Mayorga notes, “all the parts of Peirce's grand

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<sup>241</sup> Edward C. Moore, “The Scholastic Realism of C.S. Peirce,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Method* 12, no. 3 (March 1952): 406 – 417, 406.

<sup>242</sup> By “metaphysical realist” I mean in an epistemological sense (the position that there is a mind-independent world with a determinate nature of its own). Peirce *was*, certainly, a “metaphysical realist” in terms of his abhorance towards nominalism and maintained that general terms (universals) were quite real. Peirce explicitly claims he is *both* in an early diary entry, noting a “list of Horrid Things I am: Reality, Materialist, Transcendentalist, Idealist.” Cited in Joseph Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 58.



construction interlock so snugly that it is difficult to separate them from each other in order to examine them. As a result, any discussion of Peirce's realism has to be done in the context of his idealism”<sup>243</sup> and, conversely, any discussion of his idealism must, too, be done in the context of his realism.

At base, I maintain that the confusions arise based on a *categorical* misunderstanding, namely, what Peirce meant by “Reality” is not, by any means, the common connotation (nor denotation) of the term. Stemming from his close reading of Scotus, Peirce rejected nominalism in all its forms (certainly at the end of his career but there is good evidence to suggest that even from the start, despite the nominalistic undercurrent that appeared throughout his early writings, that he was *never* a nominalist). As such, Peirce maintained the real existence of general kinds and, consequently, what was “Real” was in no sense limited to what we can see, smell, taste, or touch. “Reality” was *part* of our experience of the world but “existence,” the brute facticity of our encountered environment, was something else entirely.

Peirce jokingly claimed to be afflicted with a kind of “triadomania.” He saw the world in sets of threes. Although there was certainly the scent of Hegel in the mix, it was Peirce’s engagement with Kant (what he claimed was the most challenging study of his entire career<sup>244</sup>) that gave life to his triune system. Starting from Kant’s twelve categories, Peirce maintained that they could be reduced to three. He then made an exhaustive study on how they could be reduced no further and that all potential categories *greater* than three could be reduced *to* those three. In the briefest possible terms, Peirce

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<sup>243</sup> Rosa Maria Perez-Teran Mayorga, *From Realism to ‘Realicism’: The Metaphysics of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 104.

<sup>244</sup> Peirce, Charles S., *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, 8 Volumes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931 – 1936), CP 1.561. I will use the standard designation “CP” from here on.

maintained, “anything that can possibly be thought of brings with it the idea of some *thing*...the category of a first...of something that is entirely independent of any reference to anything else.”<sup>245</sup> But anything that can be thought of “can also be distinguished from something else, albeit only by negation. This introduces the category of being a second...that mode of being in virtue of which it has an impact on something else to which it is second, but without regard to anything else.”<sup>246</sup> Lastly, the relation of a first to a second “bring with it the notion of mediation; that is, of setting two objects in relation to one another. This introduces the third category, which is the mode of being that derives its identity entirely from it relating two objects to one another.”<sup>247</sup>

Although I will explore his method of inquiry in full shortly, this triune system has already been hinted at in our brief allusions to that discussion to come: (1) Beliefs encounter problems that give rise to (2) doubts that stimulate inquiry until they are (3) resolved. This resolution then creates a *new* belief (“new” either because it has changed completely or else simply “new” in so far as it has survived and been strengthened by the problematic ordeal). Peirce applied this triadic system to *all* philosophical inquiry: it manifested in his semeiotics (Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness), his cosmology (Tychism, Agapism, and Synechism), and in his phenomenology, perhaps most pertinent here, as Quality (or Feeling),<sup>248</sup> Fact (or Reaction),<sup>249</sup> and Law (or Representation).<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Cornelis de Waal, *On Peirce* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 10.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>248</sup> “Qualities of phenomena, such as red, bitter, tedious, hard, heartrending, noble...the qualities merge into one another. They have no perfect identities, but only likenesses, or partial identities...still, each one is what it is in itself without help from the others. They are single but partial determinations,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.418.

<sup>249</sup> Secondness is the idea of “otherness” (Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.296) or “brute force” (Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.427). “Whenever we come to know a fact, it is by its resisting us....the resistance shows him that something independent of him is there” (Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.431).

Commonly, the question is whether or not our beliefs “correspond” to a mind-independent reality. For Peirce, however, what we understand by “Reality” is *distinct* from the brute facticity of the encountered environment, the experience of which manifests as a kind of “tension” or “resistance” to our beliefs. In sum, the categorical conflation is this: those who maintain that Peirce was a metaphysical realist and held a “correspondence” theory of Truth, (inaccurately) maintain that “Reality” is *Secondness* (existence, tension, resistance) rather than *Thirdness* (understanding, law). Conversely, those who maintain that Peirce was an idealist and held a “consensus” theory of Truth come closer to what I believe were Peirce’s commitments by situating Reality *as* Thirdness but fail to fully appreciate the brute facticity of Secondness. The result of *this* reading is a bizarre “consensus” theory wherein the sum-total of our communal beliefs *construct* Reality as if that “Reality” could be simply whatever we all (communally) *decide* it is. As I will demonstrate, after briefly exploring some of the common readings of Peirce, this latter camp comes much closer to what I believe were Peirce’s ultimate metaphysical commitments, i.e., he *was* an idealist (and was not a metaphysical realist) and *did* have a “consensus” theory of Truth (and did *not* have a “correspondence” theory of Truth), but that that reading must be carefully laid out so as not to reduce Truth *only* to a communal, ultimate opinion, as if the environment with which we transact plays no part at all in determining that consensus to begin with. In sum, there *is* an objective, external gauge (Secondness) which plays a pivotal role in creating consensus and determining

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<sup>250</sup> Externally, we call them “laws” though internally we call them “thoughts. Thoughts are neither qualities nor facts. They are not qualities because they can be produced and grow...thoughts may have reasons, and indeed, must have some reasons, good or bad. But to ask why a quality is as it is, why red is red and not green, would be lunacy...no more is it a fact. For a thought is general. It had it. I imparted it to you...it is also general in referring to all possible things, and not merely to those which happen to exist. No collection of facts can constitute a law; for the law goes beyond any accomplished facts and determines how facts that *may be*...as *general*, the law...concerns the potential world of quality, while as *fact*, it concerns the actual world as actuality,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.420.

Reality (Thirdness), but that objective, external gauge is not, itself, what Peirce *means* by “Reality.”

Though it’s true, and beyond question, that Peirce was averse to nominalism in all its forms, maintaining the *real* existence of general kinds, it does not necessarily follow that Peirce was likewise committed to the *type* of realism that postulates a wholly mind-independent reality with a determinate nature of its own. Nevertheless, a plethora of top Peirce scholars situate Peirce clearly and distinctly in the camp of adherents to metaphysical realism. Mullin says, for example, that for Peirce, “we understand reality as that which exists independently of the mind and which causes a belief or habit of action.”<sup>251</sup> As Almeder notes quite bluntly, “there can be little doubt that Charles Peirce was a metaphysical realist for the simple reason that there can be little doubt of his commitment to the belief that there is a world of knowable objects the existence of which is neither logically nor causally dependent upon the perceptual or noetic act.”<sup>252</sup> In short, what determines the veracity of a belief must be based upon, as Peirce says, “nothing human,” that is, some external permanency. As Cooke notes, for Peirce, “there are things which do not depend upon our knowing them for their existence.”<sup>253</sup> As Peirce himself said, “there is no thing which is in-itself in the sense of not being relative to the mind, though things which are relative to the mind doubtless are, apart from that relation,”<sup>254</sup> a central claim of metaphysical realism.

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<sup>251</sup> Richard Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 123.

<sup>252</sup> Robert Almeder, “Charles Peirce and the Existence of the External World,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 4, no. 2 (Spring 1968): 63 – 79, 63.

<sup>253</sup> Elizabeth Cooke, *Peirce’s Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 19.

<sup>254</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.311.

Yet, Peirce likewise seemed to be committed to a type of idealism<sup>255</sup> in which we have access only to coordinations of intricate webs of thought-signs and the limits of phenomenological experience. As Almeder notes quite correctly, the problem becomes how this apparent metaphysical realism can be “rendered compatible with his obvious and frequent espousal of idealism.”<sup>256</sup>

The first point to clarify is that “Truth” correlates with “Reality” in parallel with the correlation of “true beliefs” and “reality.” Whenever a belief leads to the conclusions we expect, that belief can be said to be “true” but “always provisional”<sup>257</sup> in keeping with Peirce’s fallibilism. Consequently, the “reality” that a “true belief” is about is, likewise, provisional. A *complete* knowledge (the Truth about Reality) is a goal not-yet-achieved. As Cooke notes, “since we obviously do not have this knowledge now, Peirce’s solution is to give it more time – a lot more time. Given enough time and given enough inquiry we will know the objects better and better.”<sup>258</sup> This is Peirce’s famous formulation of the

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<sup>255</sup> Not all Peirce scholars maintain that Peirce was, in fact, an idealist of any kind, choosing to focus instead on his metaphysical realism. Riley, for example, says quite blatantly that “Peirce is not ‘a phenomenalist or an idealist’...but that he is a realist who insists that objects of knowledge are independent of and external to the knowing subject,” B. Gresham Riley, “Existence, Reality, & Objects of Knowledge: A Defense of C.S. Peirce as a Realist,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (winter, 1968): 34 – 48, 34 – 35. Though I am sympathetic with such a reading, it is my intent to demonstrate that Peirce’s commitment to realism is highly qualified and not at all consistent with “metaphysical realism” as it is traditionally conceived and that Peirce was, concurrently, a staunch idealist in an equally qualified and nuanced sense.

<sup>256</sup> Almeder, “Charles Peirce and the Existence of the External World,” *Op. Cit.*, 63. It should be noted, too, that Almeder, himself, had no interest in trying to disentangle Peirce’s apparently simultaneous commitments to both idealism and metaphysical realism, noting that “we will show that there has not yet been given a satisfactory analysis of the way in which Peirce justified his realistic belief. We will leave to better minds at a later date the second and more difficult task of reconciling Peirce’s commitment to metaphysical realism with his strong commitment to idealism,” *ibid.*, which I take to be my general task here, “better mind” or no.

<sup>257</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.485.

<sup>258</sup> Cooke, *Peirce’s Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 20

“long run”<sup>259</sup> theory of inquiry as it applies to our metaphysical understanding of Reality.

As Peirce himself said:

The real, then, is that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you. Thus, the very origin of the conception of reality shows that this conception essentially involves the notion of a COMMUNITY, without definite limits, and capable of an indefinite increase of knowledge.<sup>260</sup>

As Feibleman notes, “since the method of attaining to reality is that of an indefinitely prolonged series of inductions,”<sup>261</sup> so that, in Peirce’s words, “a sufficiently long succession of inferences from parts to whole will lead men to knowledge of it,”<sup>262</sup> consequently, Reality is “something which is constituted by an event indefinitely future”<sup>263</sup> which is not the *actuality* of Secondness but the “the idea of probability” in Thirdness.<sup>264</sup> Reality is the realm of real possibilities.<sup>265</sup> In a sense, as Feibleman notes, Peirce’s concept of Reality is “wider than”<sup>266</sup> Truth because it includes, also, the reality of *falsity*, as well. The false is *real* and a prime motivating force in our cognitive growth,<sup>267</sup> a point taken up by Eco in both *Serendipities* (especially in his treatise “The Force of Falsity”) and its corresponding novel, *Baudolino*. Indeed, as Peirce said, it’s

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<sup>259</sup> “This idea that there are no incognizables, and that given enough time, and free inquiry, we can know the real with increasingly greater approximation, is Peirce’s idea of the ‘long run,’” *Ibid.*

<sup>260</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.311

<sup>261</sup> James Feibleman, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Charles S. Peirce: Interpreted as a System* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1970), 181.

<sup>262</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.351.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.331.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 2.650.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 4.547 and CP 4.580.

<sup>266</sup> Feibleman, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Charles S. Peirce: Interpreted as a System, Op. Cit.*, 181.

<sup>267</sup> “Peirce gives falsity credit both for the increase in knowledge and for the knower’s awareness of the limitations of his knowledge. It is truth we seek and falsity that we seek to avoid; but the stimulus to the pursuit of truth comes from falsity, so that we are obliged to the error of our knowledge for the suggestion that the truth is something that we do not necessarily possess and that is to be sought,” *Ibid.*, 211. Thus, if we seek truth (and seek to avoid falsity), *both* must be *real*, for Peirce, the former as a goal, the latter as both an obstacle *and* an impetus for further inquiry.

“futile...to imagine that we were to clear up the idea of *truth* by the more occult idea of *reality*.”<sup>268</sup> For Peirce, Reality “is a potentiality; and its mode of being is *esse in futuro*. The future is potential, not actual,”<sup>269</sup> thus always necessarily vague, though chance and error diminish over the long run as our inquiries continue to progress. If Reality is both *in futuro* as well as something “wider” than Truth insofar as it includes actuality *and* potentiality, truth *and* falsity, it becomes harder to claim that Peirce was in any way dedicated to a “correspondence” theory of Truth.

Nevertheless, Peirce spoke often about this indefinite and ideal end of inquiry. From the side of ontology, what “is” (ultimately) is the “object of the final opinion.”<sup>270</sup> From the side of epistemology, what “we know” (ultimately), that is, “what is true,” is the “final opinion” itself. As Cooke notes, “the real which exists now, can only be known in the future.”<sup>271</sup> Staab explores this notion further in noting:

Pure science can never attain the status of a full belief; scientific beliefs are only hopes. They signify what would be the case in the infinite long-run if inquiry were taken sufficiently far by a sufficient number of inquirers. Beliefs held by scientists today can at best provide us with a vectorial indication of the general tendency in which the universe is developing towards.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.578.

<sup>269</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 2.148.

<sup>270</sup> Cooke, *Peirce's Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, *Op. Cit.*, 20. As Mullin notes, “the scientific method serves to distinguish true from false beliefs. Peirce believed that if scientific research were pushed far enough on any problem, it would yield a solution on which all investigators would agree. He defined truth as the opinion on which all investigators would agree. The object of that opinion is reality,” Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 123.

<sup>271</sup> Cooke, *Peirce's Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, *Op. Cit.*, 20.

<sup>272</sup> Janice Staab, “The Laboratory-Trained Believer: Peirce on the Scientific Character of Belief,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 30, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 939 – 957, 946. Further, “human opinion universally tends in the long run to a definite form, which is the truth. Let any human being have enough information and exert enough thought upon any question, and the result will be that he will arrive at a certain definitive conclusion, which is the same that any other mind will reach under sufficiently favorable conditions,” Herbert W. Schneider, *A History of American Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 437.

However, between Peirce's commitment to fallibilism as well as his "first rule of reason" which demands a rejection of any end of inquiry, even reality (as we know it) and truth (as we conceive it) are ever and always revisable, making both Peirce's metaphysical commitments to realism as well as his methodological conception of the "long run" far more regulative principles,<sup>273</sup> guiding inquiry, than static, timeless and essential certainties in themselves. Cooke agrees in her analysis in saying "the long run can be conceived...as simply an ideal and not an actual state, that is, not a foundational state."<sup>274</sup>

If inquiry into the real were to go on forever, what we would all agree to – provided we are critical and scientific – is the 'final opinion.' This final opinion is an ideal state which serves to guide inquiry. And as an ideal it also contains Peirce's own pragmatic views of truth and the real. That is, what is true and what is real are whatever is contained in the long run of inquiry. So, effectively, we do not really have the truth in the here and now, but the community of inquiry can track it closer and closer, into the future. It is a limit we approach (as in the calculus), and for this reason some refer to it as the limit theory of truth and knowledge.<sup>275</sup>

A true belief leads us to that expected conclusion; a false belief leads us astray.<sup>276</sup> As Mullin notes, "Peirce defines truth as that which if acted on, leads us to the point at which we aim and not astray" which is the key to distinguishing between "a true and a false belief."<sup>277</sup> This is in the *here* and *now*, and thus nothing ever "cashes out" *permanently*, for Peirce, but always only provisionally "true" as we progress towards Truth (the ideal limit of inquiry) over the long run.

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<sup>273</sup> Cooke notes that many scholars of Peirce are uncertain as to the answer to this question: "is the long run an *actual* state or a *regulative ideal* for inquiry?" Cooke, *Peirce's Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, *Op. Cit.*, 20

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>276</sup> "We call a belief true if the action that it produces leads us to what we expect in reality," Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 123

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*



As Mullin notes, “Peirce gives a pragmatic explanation of reality itself” in which “we distinguish reality from fiction by defining the real as,”<sup>278</sup> as Peirce himself said, “that whose characters are independent of what anybody may think them to be.”<sup>279</sup> As Mullin continues, “we determine that the sensible effect of any real thing is to produce a belief.”<sup>280</sup> As such, on this reading of Peirce as a metaphysical realist, there exists a “reciprocal relationship”<sup>281</sup> between truth and reality: “we understand reality as that which exists independently of the mind and which causes a belief or habit of action. We call a belief true if the action that it produces leads us to what we expect in reality.”<sup>282</sup>

Alternatively, there are those Peirce scholars that locate him as an *idealist* of sorts, relying upon the inductive inference of his theory of inquiry rather than an appeal to an immediate perception of “Secondness” as indication of the existence of the external world. Murphey, for example, says:

The possession of haecceity therefore confers upon its object individuality and existence. But it does not necessarily confer externality (1.376) Peirce usually gives three tests for externality (1) direct inward effort to suppress the apparition (2) appeal to other observers (3) tests by physical concomitants and effects (6.334). Thus the externality of an object is inferred not perceived, whereas haecceity is perceived not inferred (1.376). Nor is the experience of haecceity proof of reality.<sup>283</sup>

For Murphey, the achieved objective of inquiry via this inferential, inductive process *is* the object of experience but an object that in no way necessitates the further assumption that said object exists externally from the inquiring mind with a determinate

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<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>279</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.405.

<sup>280</sup> Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy, Op. Cit.*, 123

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.* Bruce Altshuler fleshes this out further in noting, “the truth is what is affirmed at the ideal end of inquiry, and reality is the object of such settled belief,” Bruce Altshuler, “Peirce’s Theory of Truth and His Early Idealism,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1980): 118 – 140, 121.

<sup>283</sup> Murray Murphey, *The Development of Peirce’s Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 310 – 311.

nature of its own. This reading, however, eschews the significance of “Secondness” as something that is *not* within the control of the inquirer him or herself, namely, that there remains an aspect of the inductive inference which appears to be beyond the process of induction itself. Almeder critiques Murphey’s reading on this point by citing the rest of Peirce’s thoughts on the matter in the passages referred to by Murphey above:

Looking once more at activity, we observe that the only consciousness we have of it is the sense of resistance. We are conscious of hitting or getting hit, of meeting with a fact. But whether the activity is within or without we know only by secondary signs and not by our original faculty of recognizing facts.<sup>284</sup>

Indeed, Peirce called this “sense of resistance” an “*external* fact, of another something.”<sup>285</sup> For although Murphey is quite right in highlighting the significance of the inductive inference of inquiry in determining the object of experience he doesn’t address the “resistance” of Secondness thoroughly enough to unhinge Peirce’s phenomenological idealism from an apparent commitment to metaphysical realism.

Some Peirce scholars, like Richard Bernstein, take the opposite stance as Murphey, alleging, “Peirce’s phenomenological treatment of the category of Secondness represents an attempt to overcome idealism and establish contact with the real external world.”<sup>286</sup> Bernstein’s insights, central to our discussion here, warrant a lengthy citation:

Part of the confusion of empiricism and phenomenalism results from the way in which there is a wavering between thinking of an impression as a small bit of stuff, and mistakenly thinking of an impression as representational, as an impression of something, just as thought is ‘of’ or ‘about’ something. But even when we make the point that anything which is a cognition or thought, must be about something, this does not help us to escape idealism. Indeed, the problem of relating the intentional object – the object of which we are conscious – to the so-called transcendental

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<sup>284</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.376.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>286</sup> Altshuler, “Peirce’s Theory of Truth and His Early Idealism,” *Op. Cit.*, 73.

object becomes even more acute. But Peirce undercuts the idealist tendencies implicit in both phenomenalism and phenomenology by pointing out that there is an element of Secondness which can be prescinded from perception. When we perceive something we are aware of an essential duality in which there is something which stands against us and is not exhausted in the act of perception. To perceive is to perceive something external to the perceiver.<sup>287</sup>

The aspect of Secondness highlighted by Bernstein here is *within* phenomenological experience but stands *against* our inquiry as a point of tension or resistance, as we've noted above, and is never wholly "exhausted" in the act of perception itself. This squares with Peirce's insistence on the open-ended nature of inquiry, namely, that the objective of inquiry *as* the achieved object of experience can only ever be increasingly approximated and never wholly encompassed. As such, though our access to the externality of the world is limited to our inductive inquiries, Secondness, itself, is testament to a world that exists independent *of* that inquiry. As Peirce noted:

The percepts, could I make sure what they were, constitute experience proper, that which I am forced to accept. But whether they are experience of the real world or only experience of a dream, is a question which I have no means of answering with absolute certainty. I have, however, three tests which, though none of them is infallible, answer very well in ordinary cases. *The first test consists in trying to dismiss the percepts. A Fancy or day-dream can commonly be dismissed by a direct effort of the will.*<sup>288</sup> *If I should find that the flow of percepts persists consistently in*

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<sup>287</sup> Richard Bernstein, "Peirce's Theory of Perception," in *Studies in the Philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Second Series, eds. Moore and Robin (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1964), 179.

<sup>288</sup> Peirce's conception of "will" is quite complex and beyond the scope of this current project. In brief, however, Peirce was critical of the traditional triadic formulation of "mind," a formulation he maintained Kant supported: "Feeling [of pleasure and pain], Knowing, and Willing" (Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.375). Peirce critiqued this tripartite formulation extensively, pertinent here to the notion of "will," Peirce noted that: "First, desire certainly includes an element of pleasure quite as much as of will. Wishing is not willing; it is a speculative variation of willing mingled with a speculative and anticipatory feeling of pleasure. Desire should therefore be struck out of the definition of the third faculty, leaving it mere volition. But volition without desire is not voluntary; it is mere activity. Consequently, all activity, voluntary or not, should be brought under the third faculty," (*Ibid.*, CP 1.376). Peirce offered, instead, a *different* triadic relation of the mind, one perfectly in keeping with the phenomenological and semeiotic categories that I will touch upon throughout this investigation, namely: "It seems, then, that the true categories of consciousness are: first, feeling, the consciousness which can be included with an instant of time, passive consciousness of quality, without recognition or analysis; second, consciousness of an interruption into the

*spite of my own will. I am usually satisfied. Still it may be an hallucination. If I have reason to suspect that it is so, I apply the second test* which consists in asking some other person whether he sees or hears the same thing. If he does and if several people do, that will ordinarily be taken as conclusive. Yet it is an established fact that some hallucinations affect whole companies of people. There remains, however, a third test that can be applied and it is far the surest of the three. Namely, I make use of my knowledge of the laws of nature (very fallible knowledge confessedly) to predict that if my percept has its cause in the real world, a certain experiment must have a certain result – a result which in the absence of that cause would not be a little surprising. I apply this test of experiment. If the result does not occur, my percept is illusory, if it does it receives strong confirmation.<sup>289</sup>

Peirce provided a further example of the “tension” or “resistance” of the experience of Secondness:

*I see an inkstand on the table. That is a percept. Moving my head I get a different percept of the inkstand. It co-alesces with the other. What I call the inkstand is a generalized percept, a quasi-inference from percepts, perhaps I might say a composite photography of percepts. In this psychical product is involved an element of resistance to me, which I am obscurely conscious of from the first. Subsequently when I accept the hypothesis of an inward subject for my thoughts, I must yield to that consciousness of resistance and admit the inkstand to the standing of an external object. Still later, I may call this in question. But as soon as I do that, I find the inkstand appears there in spite of me. If I turn away my eyes, other witnesses will tell me that it still remains. If we all leave the room and dismiss the matter from our thoughts, still a photographic camera would*

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field of consciousness, sense of resistance, of an external fact, of another something; third, synthetic consciousness, binding time together, sense of learning, thought,” (*Ibid.*, CP 1.377). For Peirce, the “will” manifested through transactions, both passive transactions and active transactions, between organisms and their environment (an environment which included other organisms): “The sense of hitting and of getting hit are nearly the same, and should be classed together. The common element is the sense of an actual occurrence, of actual action and reaction. There is an intense reality about this kind of experience, a sharp sundering of subject and object. While I am seated calmly in the dark, the lights are suddenly turned on, and at that instant I am conscious, not of a process of change, but yet of something more than can be contained in an instant. I have a sense of a saltus, of there being two sides to that instant. A consciousness of polarity would be a tolerably good phrase to describe what occurs. For will, then, as one of the great types of consciousness, we ought to substitute the polar sense,” (*Ibid.*, CP 1.380). “Will,” then, most closely resembled Peirce’s conception of Secondness, the resistance (polarity) experienced between conscious activity and an encountered environment: it is neither “feeling” (Firstness) nor “learning” (Thirdness; see *ibid.*, CP 1.381). In sum, it is the experience of transaction itself during the component of inquiry where the brute facticity of an encountered environment manifests as distinct from the inquiring organism itself whether that be outward striving or whether that be inward reacting to external stimuli.

<sup>289</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.144.

show the inkstand still there...thus or otherwise I confirm myself in the opinion that its characters are what they are, and persist at every opportunity in revealing themselves regardless of what you or I, or any man or any generation of men, may think that they are.<sup>290</sup>

As Almeder notes, “the first test consists in trying to suppress the apparition which implies that the first criterion for externality is compulsiveness (Secondness), and ordinarily the inability to suppress the apparition is taken as a sufficient indication that the object perceived is external.”<sup>291</sup> If, after this initial experience, should there remain “real doubt about the externality of what is perceived after one cannot suppress the apparition, then we must appeal to the criterion of inductive inference,”<sup>292</sup> namely, the method of inquiry itself, bringing to bear the tools and theories at our disposal in concert with our fellow inquirers to validate the veracity of our beliefs.

Thus, a question arises: can a mind, limited to its contents, ever know with any degree of certainty the nature of a reality necessarily independent of that mind? Peirce addresses that concern as he continues, providing a list of reasons in support of his position, beginning with a nod to his awareness of the potential charge of circularity in his method as he says, “it may be asked how I know that there are any Reals. If this hypothesis is the sole support of my method of inquiry, my method of inquiry must not be used to support my hypothesis.”<sup>293</sup>

He replies to his own query:

If investigation cannot be regarded as proving that there are Real things, it at least does not lead to a contrary conclusion; but the method and the conception on which it is based remain ever in harmony. No doubts of the

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<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.* CP 8.144.

<sup>291</sup> Almeder, “Charles Peirce and the Existence of the External World,” *Op. Cit.*, 77.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>293</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.384.

method, therefore, necessarily arise from its practice, as is the case with all the others.<sup>294</sup>

It is more than a mere assumption that Real things exist. For Peirce, the externality of the encountered object is central to his entire method of inquiry, namely, that there must be an environment for the organism to transact *with*. But key here is *where* in the pragmatic circuit of inquiry this externality manifests. The externality of the encountered world is not, itself, “Reality” but, rather, the midway point of Secondness. By discussing “Real things,” Peirce obfuscates his claim, however, making it appear that externality is manifest is Thirdness (the category of Reality) rather than Secondness (the category of resistance) where I maintain externality properly belongs. If Peirce’s method of inquiry is framed as organism/environment transaction it is unclear to what degree, if at all, this differs from traditional epistemological frameworks of mind/body dualisms (and all the philosophical problems of correspondance therein).

Eco is well aware of this tension and offers his own reading of Peircean realism, noting, “Peirce was interested in objects not so much as ontological sets of properties but as occasions and results of active experience. To discover an object means to discover the way in which we operate on the world producing objects or producing practical uses of them. Reality is not a datum but a Result.”<sup>295</sup> Thus, the “object” of reality is none other than the achieved “objective” of inquiry, further supporting the claim that Peirce’s realism was far more akin to a form of idealism than classic metaphysical realism’s claims to a mind-independent object. Reality is a “result” (something forged *of* inquiry) *not* a “datum” (something independent discovered *by* inquiry). As Altshuler notes,

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<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>295</sup> Umberto Eco, “Peirce’s Notion of the Interpretant,” *MLN* 91, no. 6 (1976): 1457 – 1472, 1465.

Peirce formulates his views of truth as the belief(s) affirmed as the ideal end of scientific investigation. While Peirce did want to maintain an idealistic epistemology, in the sense of a theory which only refers to mental content in explaining knowledge, he certainly did not want this to be a subjective idealism.<sup>296</sup>

As Altshuler notes, “Peirce’s theory of truth is thus presented as an attempt to preserve objectivity within an epistemological idealism.”<sup>297</sup> Committing Peirce to a *form* of idealism would square with his semiotics and phenomenology and by finding some kernel of objectivity *within* his idealism would help explain Peirce’s language about the apparent permanence of Reals of experience. This will be the heart of my own interpretation.

The very sensation of “doubt” as well as the sensation of having a “belief” is contributes to Peirce’s position. As Peirce said:

The feeling which gives rise to any method of fixing belief is a dissatisfaction at two repugnant propositions. But here already is a vague concession that there is some *one* thing which a proposition should represent. Nobody, therefore, can really doubt that there are Reals, for, if he did, doubt would not be a source of dissatisfaction. The hypothesis, therefore, is one which every mind admits. So that the social impulse does not cause men to doubt it.<sup>298</sup>

If there weren’t something akin to an objective permanency (something mind-independent), then the sensation of doubt would be so ubiquitous that it would no longer be a source of dissatisfaction, for dissatisfaction is experienced *as* dissatisfaction only in contrast to an experience of satisfaction forged of a belief. If Peirce were correct, and every mind experiences both sensations, likely, too, there exists some objectivity which testifies to the veracity of a belief and its satisfaction which is precisely what gives doubt

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<sup>296</sup> Altshuler, “Peirce’s Theory of Truth and His Early Idealism,” *Op. Cit.*, 120.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>298</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.384.

such a dissatisfying taste. Unlike the other methods of fixing belief, “scientific investigation has had the most wonderful triumphs in the way of settling opinion”<sup>299</sup> precisely because there is some objective component lacking in the other methods which helps “fix” belief. As Peirce said:

This is the only one of the four methods which presents any distinction of a right and a wrong way. If I adopt the method of tenacity, and shut myself out from all influences, whatever I think necessary to doing this, is necessary according to that method. So with the method of authority: the state may try to put down heresy by means which, from a scientific point of view, seem very ill-calculated to accomplish its purposes; but the only test *on that method* is what the state thinks; so that is cannot pursue the method wrongly. So with the *a priori* method. The very essence of it is to think as one is inclined to think...with the scientific method the case is different...the test of whether I am truly following the method is not an immediate appeal to my feelings and purposes, but, on the contrary, itself involves an application of the method. Hence it is that bad reasoning as well as good reasoning is possible; and this fact is the foundation of the practical side of logic.<sup>300</sup>

As Nagel notes, Peirce’s pragmatism “was offered to philosophers in order to bring to an end disputes which no observation of facts could settle because they involved terms with no definite meaning.”<sup>301</sup> The application of Peirce’s pragmatic maxim, that the meaning of anything is the experiences it elicits and the foreseeable consequences of its application, clarifies the vagueries inherent in some philosophical terminology that Peirce felt symptomatic of *a priori* philosophies. Only the scientific method of inquiry has the ability to critique itself by virtue of its own method.

As I’ve shown, there is (ironically) no consensus among Peirce scholars as to his ultimate epistemological-qua-metaphysical commitments. His language, especially in

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<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.385.

<sup>301</sup> Ernest Nagel, “Charles S. Peirce, Pioneer of Modern Empiricism,” *Philosophy of Science* 7, no. 1 (1940): 69 – 80, 73.



“Fixation of Belief,” would seem to indicate a type of metaphysical realism. His language throughout much of the rest of his work, especially his semiotics and phenomenology, would indicate that he’s much more of an idealist, confined to the content of that semiotic web of ideas. As Rockmore notes, “the interpretation of Peirce’s ambiguous view of reality, or the mind-independent real, is delicate.”<sup>302</sup>

To begin, the key term to focus on which comes up time and again in his discussion of his method for fixing belief is “objectivity,” namely, that the object of inquiry must have some quality beyond what any single individual could say about it, allowing for public scrutiny and communal verification. As Smith notes, “setting out from the assumption that the truth must have a universal reach, Peirce cast suspicion on any way of fixing belief which ultimately rests upon private insight or upon the authority of any individual or group.”<sup>303</sup> All three of the counterproductive methods rest on a certain subjectivity that defies universal consensus (or even the potential *for* universal consensus), as I’ll demonstrate in the following chapter. All three prove to be too individualistic and, thus, for Peirce some objective standard must be achieved that would undermine any singular individual’s belief, thereby providing a communal touchstone for dialogue, instigating the interplay of different voices and different beliefs. Perhaps, however, it would be more in keeping with Peirce’s method of inquiry to say that although consensus, itself, does not determine Truth, an increasing consensus of beliefs over time in an ever-expanding pool of inquirers engaged in Peirce’s recommended method will *yield* an increasingly determinate consensus which, properly observed, would be a good indication that our approximating ascent towards “Truth” is

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<sup>302</sup> Tom Rockmore, “Hegel, Peirce, and Knowledge,” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, New Series 13, no. 1 (1999): 166 – 184, 174.

<sup>303</sup> John E. Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 22.

underway.<sup>304</sup> The objective character in inquiry, as Peirce notes, is not beyond all human experience *qua* experience. This sentiment is reflected in a particularly intriguing passage:

That which any true proposition asserts is *real*, in the sense of being as it is regardless of what you or I may think about it. Let this proposition be a general conditional proposition as to the future, and it is a real general<sup>305</sup> such as is calculated really to influence human conduct.<sup>306</sup>

The objective component that guides inquiry ensures that “Reality” and “Truth” are beyond the influence and total monopoly of any finite number of individuals.<sup>307</sup> It is a

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<sup>304</sup> As I will discuss throughout this project, Peirce maintained that “Truth” in an absolute sense of timeless certainty was never wholly achievable due to the nature of inquiry itself. As an endless series of transactions between one inquirer and another, and between inquirers and their social and natural environments, the infinite multiplicity of possible future transactions postpones claims of apodictic certainty indefinitely. However, this is not to say that Peirce succumbed to skepticism (the position that knowledge requires certainty, we can never have certainty, therefore we can never claim to have knowledge). The realization of fallibility is not a terminus of inquiry but its beginning: motivated by perpetually incomplete knowledge we strive to learn more. And simply because we will never know “pi” *completely* (i.e., to every decimal point it has) due to the infinite nature of the project, that is not to say that the claim “pi is 3.1415” is not knowledge, merely incomplete knowledge. Provisionally, for Peirce, we may claim that some belief is true provided it leads from the guiding premise to the conclusions expected of it, and rest secure in the possibility that many of our beliefs are, in fact, true, though we will never know for certain that any particular belief is beyond potential future revision or augmentation. As he noted: “but to make believe one does not believe anything is an idle and self-deceptive pretence. Of the things which seem to us clearly true, probably the majority are approximations to the truth. We never can attain absolute certainty; but such clearness and evidence as a truth can acquire will consist in its appearing to form an integral unbroken part of the great body of truth,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 4.71.

<sup>305</sup> Peirce’s categorization of the “general” here as “real” is ambiguous though I contend it may be a nod to a type of anti-nominalism found in Scotus.

<sup>306</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.432. Certainly this is a *psychological* claim: a calculation that is meant to influence human *conduct*. Peirce’s language here was ambiguous but the thrust of his position, I believe, was this: there is some external permanence beyond any individual inquiry that creates a resistance (Peirce’s category of “Secondness”) that, in turn, thwarts some beliefs from reaching the conclusions they anticipate. We cannot, for example, adamantly refuse to believe that fire will not burn our flesh, for a component of inquiry (which I will discuss in full shortly) will throw that belief into the doubt requisite for its reevaluation, not merely based upon subjective opinion or fancy, but, too, a real externality that cannot be ignored.

<sup>307</sup> “Universality, he thought, can be achieved only if we can find a way of subjecting our thinking to a standard which remains unaffected by that thinking. The solution to the problem is found in the method developed by natural science. Individuals and individual circumstances may vary; method introduces the element of universality necessary if we are to avoid individual prejudice and caprice,” Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 22 – 23 Further, as Bernstein notes, “Peirce insisted that truth is public and that it is only through such a community that one can escape the pitfalls of private prejudice and idiosyncrasies,” Richard J. Bernstein, “Charles Sanders Peirce and the Nation,” *The Antioch Review* 21, no. 1 (Spring 1961): 15 – 25, 18.

“general” and “conditional” proposition, influencing human conduct by guiding inquiry toward a common goal, thus acting as a regulative principle far more than a deterministic conception of what, metaphysically, Reality ultimately must be. However, as Altshuler notes, Peirce is ultimately and irrevocably an idealist:

The concept of reality is shown to be dependent on thought in two ways. The first is rather obvious. As the object of the final opinion, reality depends on the existence of some opinion...this thought of which reality is not independent is thought *in general* (7.336) – for it must be purged of the idiosyncrasies<sup>308</sup> of particular individuals, so as to be the product of reason alone. When Peirce says, in this context, that this ‘objective final opinion is independent of the thoughts of any particular men’ (7.336), he is not committing himself to the existence of thought apart from individual thinkers. What he wants to be able to do is maintain his fallibilism while still defining reality in terms of thought...his general point is that our conceiving of reality as the object of the final opinion is to define reality in terms of thought.<sup>309</sup>

Peirce was thoroughly committed to his fallibilism and, I would argue, a certain form of idealism wherein “one cannot appeal to anything outside of the series of possible cognitions.”<sup>310</sup> If we could experience a thing fully, that is to say, know it completely, there would be nothing left to learn about it, defying Peirce’s ultimate mandate, and thus must be rejected by Peirce based on the principle of fallibilism of his own methodology. As Peirce said:

You only puzzle yourself by talking of this metaphysical ‘truth’ and metaphysical ‘falsity,’ that you know nothing about. All you have any dealings with are your doubts and beliefs, with the course of life that forces new beliefs upon you and gives you power to doubt old beliefs. If your terms ‘truth’ and ‘falsity’ are taken in such senses as to be definable

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<sup>308</sup> Peirce was an avid fan of Kant and knew his work exceedingly well, as all Peirce scholars readily acknowledge. Altshuler even notes, on this precise point, that “to achieve this end he must abstract from personal idiosyncrasy, and this is the force of the appeal to community. Just as Kant attempted to derive the moral law from reason (rationalist) alone, so Peirce wants to derive truth from the exercise of the pure scientific intellect divorced from its historical...realization in living person,” Altshuler, “Peirce’s Theory of Truth and His Early Idealism,” *Op. Cit.*, 122.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, 125 – 126.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

in terms of doubt and belief and the course of experience (as for example they would be, if you were to define the ‘truth’ as that to a belief in which belief would tend if it were to tend indefinitely toward absolute fixity), well and good: in that case, you are talking about doubt and belief. But if by truth and falsity you mean something not definable in terms of doubt and belief in any way, then you are talking of entities of whose existence you can know nothing, and which Ockham’s razor would clean shave off. Your problems would be greatly simplified, if, instead of saying that you want to know the ‘Truth,’ you were simply to say that you want to attain a state of belief unassailable by doubt.<sup>311</sup>

As such, there must always remain something *beyond* human experience that evades total capture. Yet, for Peirce, this does not result in hopeless skepticism nor fall prey to the classic ego-centric predicament for we are not attempting a correspondence between our own, private thoughts and the corresponding object of inquiry. As De Waal says, “‘reality’ can mean nothing *other* than the object of permanently settled belief.”<sup>312</sup> And Truth, subsequently, “is nothing more, and also nothing less, than permanently settled opinion.”<sup>313</sup> As Peirce himself concludes, “the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real.”<sup>314</sup>

The problem, as Altshuler expertly points out, seems to be this: “the difficulty is that reality is supposed to depend in some sense on the existence of a belief lying at the ideal end of inquiry, but one would not want to say that things are not real until that belief is held.”<sup>315</sup> The problem, that is, is this question of “dependence”: to what degree does Reality depend on thought and to what degree does thought depend on Reality?

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<sup>311</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.416.

<sup>312</sup> Cornelis De Waal, *On Pragmatism* (California: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 24.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>314</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.407.

<sup>315</sup> Altshuler, “Peirce’s Theory of Truth and His Early Idealism,” *Op. Cit.*, 123.

Rockmore summarizes the problem well in noting some of the features of the two readings:

His writings about the concept of reality suggest two incompatible views, which cannot clearly or simply be separated merely through textual exegesis: on the one hand, he claims knowledge of the independent real as it is to which we approximate, which is a version of realism, the modern successor to Platonism, understood as a grasp of the mind-independent world. On the other hand, he understands reality as that of which increasing, finally satisfactory knowledge is given in experience, which is Hegel's view, or at least very close to Hegel's view.<sup>316</sup>

The identification of the Real with thought (the final opinion) can be seen in several passages from Peirce. He said, for example, "I do not say that any thinking process is the reality; but I do say that that thought to which we struggle to have our thoughts coincide, is the reality."<sup>317</sup> Further, Peirce said, "that which is believed in, in true knowledge, is real. It appears then that the reality is something with which thought may be identified."<sup>318</sup> Again, this grows out of his rejection of any form of subjective idealism in conjunction with a necessary rejection of a type of infallible metaphysical commitment that might allow the illusion (for it could only ever be an "illusion" for Peirce) of epistemological finality.

Although Dewey maintains that Peirce was a "realist" whose philosophy depends "upon the assumption of real things which really have effects or consequences,"<sup>319</sup> he clarifies Peirce's position, noting:

The fact that in philosophy at least we are dealing with the *conception* of reality, with reality as a term having rational purport, and hence with something whose meaning is itself to be determined in terms of

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<sup>316</sup> Rockmore, "Hegel, Peirce and Knowledge," *Op. Cit.*, 175 – 176.

<sup>317</sup> Peirce #367, p. 22 (in Altshuler, "Peirce's Theory of Truth and His Early Idealism," *Op. Cit.*, 128)

<sup>318</sup> Peirce #372, p. 10 (in *Ibid.*)

<sup>319</sup> John Dewey, "The Pragmatism of Peirce," *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 13, no. 26 (Dec. 1916): 709 – 715, 715.

consequences. That ‘reality’ means the object of those beliefs which have, after prolonged and cooperative inquiry, become stable, and ‘truth’ the quality of these beliefs is a logical consequence of this position.<sup>320</sup>

Dewey is quite right that it is the “conception” of Reality that is the end result and the “object” of inquiry is none other than the achieved “objective” of that communal process, not an entity separate from that communal conception. Take, for example, this curious passage from Peirce:

The question is, ‘Whether corresponding to our thoughts and sensations, and represented in some sense by them, there are realities, which are not only independent of the thought of you, and me, and any number of men, but which are absolutely independent of thought altogether.’ The objective final opinion is independent of thoughts of any particular men, but it is not independent of thought *in general*.<sup>321</sup>

As Potter notes, “the passage is curious because on the one hand it declares for epistemological realism, and on the other for objective idealism.”<sup>322</sup> I argue that Potter’s reading is quite right, namely, that there *is* a component of epistemological<sup>323</sup> realism (though highly qualified and not at all like traditional views), as well as a kind of *objective* idealism in sharp contrast to the *subjective* form as we’ve discussed above. As Sheriff notes, “our situation,” for Peirce, “is that we never experience objects except through previous signs.”<sup>324</sup> Therefore, as Peirce said, “everything which is present to us is a phenomenal manifestation of ourselves.”<sup>325</sup> Nevertheless, “this does not prevent its

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<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>321</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.336.

<sup>322</sup> Vincent G. Potter, S.J., *Charles S. Peirce: On Norms and Ideals* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967), 76 - 77.

<sup>323</sup> Potter is right to specify “epistemological” realism in his analysis here. There is another kind of realism (namely, that which is opposed to nominalism) that Peirce most certainly was and which will become important in our analyses to follow.

<sup>324</sup> John K. Sheriff, *The Fate of Meaning: Charles Peirce, Structuralism, and Literature* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 115.

<sup>325</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.283.

being a phenomenon of something without us, just as a rainbow is at once a manifestation both of the sun and the rain.”<sup>326</sup> As Sheriff notes, “Peirce sees reality and thought as interdependent, rather than incompatible,”<sup>327</sup> allowing Peirce to claim that “there is nothing...to prevent our knowing outward things as they really are, and it is most likely that we do thus know them in numberless cases, although we can never be absolutely certain of doing so in any special case.”<sup>328</sup> Rather than apodictic certainty, as we’ve seen, a belief about Reality is one that “if duly persisted in, must, in the very nature of things, lead to a result indefinitely approximating to the truth in the long run.”<sup>329</sup>

As Potter rightly notes, “it is not a question...of the existence of a real ‘external’ world. Peirce never considered that to be a genuine problem. It is rather a fact of everyday experience, doubts about which could be easily dispelled unless one is blinded by some irrational scruple about the kind of evidence required or prejudiced by a preconceived theory.”<sup>330</sup> The fact of externality is never a question, for Peirce. The critical question is *where* in Peirce’s circuit of inquiry does this externality manifest. As Peirce said, we ought “to regard the appearances of sense as only signs of realities. Only, the realities which they represent would...be...intellectual conceptions which are the last products of the mental action which is set in motion” by inquiry.<sup>331</sup> The “last products” mentioned here, the achieved objectives of inquiry, are “the final and definite

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<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>327</sup> Sheriff, *The Fate of Meaning: Charles Peirce, Structuralism, and Literature*, *Op. Cit.*, 116.

<sup>328</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.311.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 2.781.

<sup>330</sup> Potter, *Charles S. Peirce: On Norms and Ideals*, *Op. Cit.*, 76.

<sup>331</sup> Charles S. Peirce, *Charles S. Peirce: Selected Writings (Values in a Universe of Chance)*, ed. Philip P. Wiener (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 83.

opinions”<sup>332</sup> to which, as Peirce says, “the mind of man is, on the whole and in the long run, tending.”<sup>333</sup> The real, Peirce said...

...is that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you. Thus, the very origin of the conception of reality shows that this conception essentially involves the notion of a COMMUNITY, without definite limits, and capable of a definite increase in knowledge.<sup>334</sup>

Thus, this does not lead to a type of Cartesian skepticism for all of the reasons we discussed above but, rather, indicates an ongoing process of knowledge acquisition and the strengthening and augmentation of the beliefs at hand. The Cartesian mind/body dualism, alternatively manifest as mind/world, does not resurface in Peirce’s organism/environment distinction. Externality is a *part* of inquiry, not its goal. “Reality,” in the nuanced form Peirce conceives of it, is Thirdness of which Secondness (this externality that philosophers traditionally view as “reality”) is but one phase or part.

As Peirce said of “truth,” for example, “there is...to every question a true answer, a final conclusion, to which the opinion of every man is constantly gravitating.”<sup>335</sup> As Sheriff notes, “individuals may not live to reach the truth, and general agreement may be postponed indefinitely”<sup>336</sup> but, as Peirce concluded, “that cannot affect what the character of that opinion shall be when it is reached.”<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Sheriff, *The Fate of Meaning: Charles Peirce, Structuralism, and Literature*, Op. Cit., 115.

<sup>333</sup> Charles S. Peirce. *Charles S. Peirce: Selected Writings (Values in a Universe of Chance)*, Op. Cit., 82.

<sup>334</sup> Peirce, Op. Cit., CP 5.311.

<sup>335</sup> Peirce, *Charles S. Peirce: Selected Writings (Values in a Universe of Chance)*, Op. Cit., 81.

<sup>336</sup> Sheriff, *The Fate of Meaning: Charles Peirce, Structuralism, and Literature*, Op. Cit., 115.

<sup>337</sup> Peirce, *Charles S. Peirce: Selected Writings (Values in a Universe of Chance)*, Op. Cit., 82. The “it” here is ambiguous: was Peirce referring to Truth at the hypothetical end of the long run? Or was he referring to a true belief in the here and now? I maintain that Peirce was referring to the Truth, here, at the end of the long run, ensconced as this particular passage is amidst some of his discussion of the “destined” outcome of inquiry’s progression, namely, that if pushed far enough, inquiry ought to terminate in a belief, shared by all who inquire, that is immune to further problematization and, thus, immune for further refinement: a belief that cannot be disrupted by doubt.



Peirce must commit himself to *some* form of objective externality from the outset for, as Potter notes, “the very enterprise of science requires it.”<sup>338</sup> In part, this hearkens back to Peirce’s identification of “beliefs” with “guiding principles” in inquiry, predictive of conclusions that may or may not be fulfilled. Over time, these predictions in science run into fewer and fewer problems, namely, the guiding principles continue to lead to the expected conclusions until, at last, science can claim that certain “truths” about the world have been attained.<sup>339</sup> However, even these truths, in keeping with Peirce’s fallibilism, are never absolute. As Potter notes:

Science necessarily makes *predictions* which in the majority of cases are fulfilled in the event (cf. [CP] 1.26, 1.343, 5.96, 8.212, etc.). A prediction is essentially general and as such can never be completely fulfilled. It says what would be the case whenever certain conditions are fulfilled. No series of actual cases, however long, will exhaust the prediction. But when a prediction shows a definite tendency to be fulfilled, that decided tendency can only be due to the fact that the future event are governed by a law, not be sheer chance.<sup>340</sup>

The fact that there *is* a decided tendency, over time, for the achieved objectives of inquiry to coalesce into a type of consensus between different strands of inquiry is a good indication that there is a determinate external world that conditions, in no small part, the results of the inquiry, rather than sheer chance which could not, in itself, explain why such a consensus is achieved over time.

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<sup>338</sup> Potter, *Charles S. Peirce: On Norms and Ideals*, *Op. Cit.*, 84. See also in Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.351 and CP 7.186. As Peirce notes, “science has always been at heart realistic, and always must be so,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.20. See also CP 5.12 and CP 5.423.

<sup>339</sup> This seems to be in sharp contrast to Kuhn’s conception of science. As Rosenthal notes, Kuhn’s “denial of the empiricist dogma that there is a permanent neutral observation language, that there must be a neutral epistemological framework to evaluate competing theories or that there is a discoverable set of rules for the resolution of conflicting statements, combined with his notion of persuasion and his radical claim that at the most fundamental level of incommensurability scientists are practicing in different worlds and seeing different things, has led to charges of subjectivism, relativism, irrationalism, and the denial of scientific progress,” Sandra B. Rosenthal, *Charles Peirce’s Pragmatic Pluralism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 1.

<sup>340</sup> Potter, *Charles S. Peirce: On Norms and Ideals*, *Op. Cit.*, 84.

For example, an analysis of object X will be undertaken by a group of individuals, their respective methods open and aboveboard to be analyzed by the other members of the group. That group swells larger, a hundred investigators, a thousand, until at last a massive number of investigators have analyzed the object X and consulted with their peers, subsuming minority reports not through ignoring them (method of tenacity), not through defying them on principles dictated from on high (method of authority), and not through simply preferring one line of thinking to another based on taste or intuition (*a priori*). The minority reports will be subsumed by a careful, communal analysis of the methods of those individuals which will deviate somehow from the majority likely through an unanalyzed premise or a flawed employment of the method of inquiry and, ideally, those individuals would see their errors by reciprocally seeing the methods employed by the majority, and “come around,” as it were and not tenaciously “sticking to their guns” at all cost. I say “subsumed” rather than “weeded out” for, as we saw in the individual employment of the method, problems and errors are not ignored, but incorporated into the final solution, strengthening a position through their overcoming. As such, the minority report is never wholly forgotten, but by being incorporated into the majority consensus, is ever available for reassessment in light of new information if there is something about that position that is worthy of revisiting. As Smith notes, “the self-correcting nature of the procedure is supposed to reside in the fact that any conclusion reached is still subject to further review at the hands of those committed to following the method.”<sup>341</sup>

Now, in this example, what object X is, ontologically, is determined through the coordination of the concurrently employed method of inquiry of this massive group of

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<sup>341</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 24 - 25

investigators who reach a consensus as to what it is. Thus far, we note, the individual processes are, on an individual level, limited, of course, to the content of each individual's own thoughts and experiences, for no single individual can go beyond what humans are capable of experiencing (that is, they can't know the object as it exists outside of human experience, and thus there is always some surplus of meaning that escapes an individual's grasp). As De Waal notes, "the pragmatic conception of truth...does not commit Peirce to maintain that there is one mammoth super story, 'the truth,' which contains the last word on all there is to know about life, the universe, and everything."<sup>342</sup> As Cooke notes, too:

The very goal of inquiry is to achieve the stable state of belief. Of course the goal of achieving a settled belief is by no means a static state, since a belief is a habit, a regular pattern of action...all our beliefs function as certain; they are *practically* certain. Although, of course, no belief is *absolutely* certain...and on Peirce's model of inquiry, the inquirer is never in a position to judge that a belief which is taken as true today will not be called into doubt tomorrow.<sup>343</sup>

As Cooke notes, "when each witness testifies to the same occurrence, that belief becomes more certain. Due to our methods and the self-corrective nature of reason, we can achieve increasingly stable beliefs regardless of where we began our inquiry."<sup>344</sup> This reflects Peirce's fallibilism and his first rule of reason which demanded no stagnation to inquiry for it is precisely because we can never know the total object, that the drive towards that hypothetically possible goal instigates further inquiry. The information gathered by the community ever-increases, and though the goal may be asymptotic (we'll never know the whole object X), that does not eschew the possibility of real progress and

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<sup>342</sup> De Waal, *On Pragmatism, Op. Cit.*, 25 - 26

<sup>343</sup> Cooke, *Peirce's Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry, Op. Cit.*, 22 - 23

<sup>344</sup> Cooke, *Peirce's Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry, Op. Cit.*, 12

real growth through inquiry. Externality (Secondness) provides an objective gauge that helps guide inquiry towards the achieved objective *of* that inquiry, namely, Reality (Thirdness) but is not, itself, what Peirce means by “Reality.” The “existence” of the external world is, as Brent rightly notes, not what Peirce ascribed to Thirdness (Reality) but Secondness, the “Outward Clash.”<sup>345</sup>

As Hausman notes:

Peirce did propose the final goal as something more than a would-be, an unactualizable ideal. He saw it as a hope.<sup>346</sup> Hope is more than a purely intellectual conception of possibility. This suggests that there is an actual, concrete state to be expected. However, this expectation is thwarted by the prospect of an infinite future. The Ultimate Would-be does not lose its status as a would-be – that is, its instances are never exhausted. Its ideality and its role in actuality as it takes its bite on the life of the inquirer are merged.<sup>347</sup>

By adopting the first rule of reason, the inquirer allows for the possibility of revising his or her beliefs in light of new information. As Staab notes, for Peirce, according to the first rule of reason, “one has the responsibility both to learn from and to speak to fellow inquirers within one’s social context.”<sup>348</sup> Indeed, it is the very essence of Socratic<sup>349</sup> *elenchus* and the definition of wisdom Plato forwarded through his iconic protagonist: “I am wiser than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he

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<sup>345</sup> Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 173.

<sup>346</sup> Indeed, as Staab says, “the attitude of the pure scientist will never be one of absolute certainty regarding the scope, content, and/or truth of his/her own knowledge. At best, a tentative hope that one’s conclusions correspond to the actual nature of things can be attained. The pure scientist must at all times be willing to reject any supposed truth if scientific experience and inquiry show this to be warranted,” Staab, “The Laboratory-Trained Believer: Peirce on the Scientific Character of Belief,” *Op. Cit.*, 946.

<sup>347</sup> Carl Hausman, *Charles S. Peirce’s Evolutionary Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 219. Further, “Peirce appeals to the self-corrective feature of science...the self-corrective feature of science rests on the hypothesis of realism. The scientific method involves taking the real world as an hypothesis, a real world which causes (albeit in an incomplete way) one’s beliefs. It is knowable to humans through the senses,” Cooke, *Peirce’s Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, *Op. Cit.*, 24.

<sup>348</sup> Staab, “The Laboratory-Trained Believer: Peirce on the Scientific Character of Belief,” *Op. Cit.*, 939.

<sup>349</sup> Peirce notes, in discussing “the rivulets at the head of the river of pragmatism” that “Socrates bathed in these waters,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.11

thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know; so I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know.”<sup>350</sup> Similarly, Peirce said, “the first step toward *finding out* is to acknowledge you do not satisfactorily know already; so that no blight can so surely arrest all intellectual growth as the blight of cocksureness; and ninety-nine out of every hundred good heads are reduced to impotence by that malady – of whose inroads they are most strangely unaware!”<sup>351</sup> As soon as apodictic certainty has been achieved (only ever a chimera, for Peirce), inquiry ends, for what reason does the inquirer still have to inquire further if he or she believes that he or she already knows everything there is to know (also an impossibility, for Peirce, in light of his semiotic theory of cognition and our inability to know the whole object) about the topic at hand?<sup>352</sup>

Indeed, Peirce noted that even in failure there is productivity if the inquirer adopts this attitude of openness to new experiences and embraces problems knowing that through the onset of problematic situations the circuit of cognitive development can begin. For even if the resolution achieved is less than satisfactory, the process itself (a new problem encountered, a new doubt experienced, a new inquiry engaged) is an experience in itself that denotes cognitive development. As Cooke notes, “because of the

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<sup>350</sup> Plato, *Five Dialogues*, trans. G.M.A. Grube (New York: Hackett, 2002), 26.

<sup>351</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.13.

<sup>352</sup> Joseph Ransdell made an exhaustive study of this precise topic, going so far as to claim that “there is a philosophical tradition that can be identified as distinctively Socratic, which had no major heirs after Plato until Peirce,” Joseph Ransdell, “Peirce and the Socratic Tradition,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 36, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 341 – 356, 341. After dismissing several spurious interpretations of Socratic “wisdom” found in *The Apology*, Ransdell equates it with the realization of the limits of one’s knowledge, as I’ve indicated here, the incompleteness of inquiry as impetus to learn more, noting that this is akin to Peirce’s sense of “fallibilism” in opposition to skepticism (see p. 343). Further, Brent, in his biography of Peirce, maintains that it was Peirce’s natural “Socratic mind...which delighted in putting every idea to the test and in following an argument irrespective of where it led” (Brent, *Charles S. Peirce: A Life, Op. Cit.*, 108) that brought Peirce into such conflict with Harvard president Charles Eliot who was, self-admittedly, an empiricist reductionist of the most banal kind (see Eliot’s eulogy of Benjamin Peirce in Brent, 108 – 109).

self-correcting features of inquiry and its ability to gain new knowledge, every inquiry will be successful to some degree if the inquirer obeys this first rule of logic.”<sup>353</sup> As

Peirce said:

Thus it is that inquiry every type, fully carried out, has the vital power of self-correction and of growth. This is a property so deeply saturating its inmost nature that it may truly be said that there is but one thing needful for learning the truth, and that is a hearty and active desire to learn.<sup>354</sup>

As Cooke summarizes, “in order to learn, one must desire to learn.”<sup>355</sup> All three of the counterproductive methods for fixing beliefs that Peirce rejects succumb to a failure, in some way, of this desire to continue inquiry. The method of tenacity outright rejects it, fearing problems and embracing antiquated beliefs at all cost. The method of authority puts certainty in the hands of a governing power, actively constructed and imposed upon a populace who are “encouraged” not to question the voice of that authority. And the *a priori* method believes that apodictic certainty is achievable and, with it, all inquiry ceases once the absolute, timeless “Truth” is achieved. As Nagel notes:

That is why Peirce found unacceptable theories of atomic facts and sensory simples as indubitable objects of knowledge, or the pretensions of philosophers to map the limits and possible objects of science – for each of these illustrates a dogmatism which blocks the road to inquiry, and to block this road was for Peirce the least forgivable and most dangerous intellectual vice.<sup>356</sup>

The adoption of the first rule of reason, hand-in-hand with the principle of fallibilism at the heart of Peirce’s philosophy, gives rise to what Peirce called the “experimentalist” model of philosophy; an attitude of open-mindedness that embraces

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<sup>353</sup> Cooke, *Peirce’s Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, *Op. Cit.*, 30

<sup>354</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.582

<sup>355</sup> Cooke, *Peirce’s Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, *Op. Cit.*, 30

<sup>356</sup> Nagel, “Charles S. Peirce, Pioneer of Modern Empiricism,” *Op. Cit.*, 78.

alternative beliefs and shuns claims to apodictic certainty that might derail the process of inquiry. In one of his later essays, Peirce noted:

When you have found, or ideally constructed upon a basis of observation, the typical experimentalist, you will find that whatever assertion you may make to him, he will either understand as meaning that if a given prescription for an experiment ever can be and ever is carried out in act, an experience of a given description will result, or else he will see no sense at all in what you say.<sup>357</sup>

As Cooke notes, “Peirce values the attitude with which one engages in inquiry. In fact, success of the inquiry stands or falls with the inquirer’s desire to learn.”<sup>358</sup> For Peirce, though the *success* of the inquiry is not dependent on the attitude of the inquirer, nevertheless, without this “active desire to learn,” notably absent to varying degrees in all three counter-productive methods of belief formation, whether or not genuine inquiry is even engaged *at all* is, at least, dependent on the requisite attitude of the inquirer.

Further, the desire to learn more implies its corollary, a certain dissatisfaction with one’s current belief set in light of infinite room for cognitive growth through the scientific method of inquiry. It is the irritation of doubt writ large: the tingling sensation that there is more yet to learn which, in turn, compels us to embark upon new inquiries, hence Peirce’s maxim: “do not block the way of inquiry.”<sup>359</sup> If inquiry is the pragmatic circuit of belief formation articulated above, then it is dependent upon the onset of problems and the irritation of doubt requisite for the instigation of inquiry and cognitive growth. Do not, therefore, allow yourself to tenaciously cling to old beliefs, for this would block the way of inquiry. Do not allow an institution to dictate your beliefs for you. Do not assume apodictic truth through an *a priori* method and rest on one’s

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<sup>357</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.411

<sup>358</sup> Cooke, *Peirce’s Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, *Op. Cit.*, 30

<sup>359</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.135

cognitive laurels in a chimerical realm of supposed timeless certainty.<sup>360</sup> As Talisse notes, “not blocking the way of inquiry in turn requires that new reasons, unfamiliar considerations, and countervailing evidence must be consulted and considered.”<sup>361</sup> Thus, as we noted earlier, not blocking the way of inquiry requires open dialogue and the *engagement* with problems rather than their avoidance. Thus, conversely, the productive method, the scientific method, embraces problems, stimulates doubt, instigates inquiry, gives rise to cognitive growth and, all told, does nothing to block the way of inquiry, all dependent upon the inquirer’s attitude to embrace that method (and not desire to embrace one of the other three) in the first place. “The most central characteristic of the scientific attitude,” characterized by the first rule of logic, is “its thoroughgoing fallibilism.”<sup>362</sup> As Smith notes:

We have no immediately certain and fully guaranteed access to reality; we are finite and fallible beings subject to error and to the temptation to intrude our own interests and prejudices into our results...outside of the community of knowers we have no access to reality; he belonged in this sense to the idealist tradition, which holds that all of our knowledge is conditioned by our human capabilities and limitations. It is not that we know only our own ideas, but that our knowledge of things is mediated by our ideas.<sup>363</sup>

Peirce’s method is universal in itself, employed by all investigators in which both the objective and the method of inquiry are available for public scrutiny and evaluation, highlighting the shortcomings of methods of belief formation that Peirce critiques in “Fixation.” As Smith notes,

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<sup>360</sup> As Cooke notes, “the method of tenacity is basically the claim that ‘I will not inquire.’ The method of authority is the method by which ‘We will not allow you to inquire.’ And the *a priori* method is that by which ‘you have no need to inquire: it is all self-evident,’” Cooke, *Peirce’s Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, *Op. Cit.*, 34. I will discuss the three methods of belief formation that Peirce critiques shortly.

<sup>361</sup> Robert Talisse, “Towards a Peircean Politics of Inquiry.” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 40, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 21 – 38, 28.

<sup>362</sup> Staab, “The Laboratory-Trained Believer: Peirce on the Scientific Character of Belief,” *Op. Cit.*, 946.

<sup>363</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 28.



Peirce's answer is that such methods, if they can be called methods at all, do not put us under any constraint; they cannot be called wrong because the authority will always establish its own validity, and we can always cling to a belief if that is our resolution...it goes against the requirement that we have a standard upon which our thinking has no effect.<sup>364</sup>

Further, it has a "self-correcting character," namely, that built into the method was Peirce's inherent fallibilism, allowing for revision and actively eschewing claims of absolute certainty, and a universal standard born of both comparing one's achieved objectives of inquiry to those of other investigators as well as comparing one's own employment of the method to the employment of the method achieved by others. Finally, unlike other methods, the method of scientific inquiry demands cooperation between parties with varying beliefs. As Smith notes,

It means essentially that the one making a claim to truth does not put forth the truth he has discovered in his own name and on his own authority, that is, it is not true because he says it or because of any authority attaching to him as an individual...in putting forth a claim to truth, the individual following the method Peirce recommends puts forth simultaneously the way in which he arrived at his result and the data on which it was based.<sup>365</sup>

Hence, we see both the self-correcting character of the method, the necessarily public component, and the correctives to the problems in the more counterproductive methods Peirce's dismissed. Further, it highlighted Peirce's unique twist on classical empiricism, for though Peirce most certainly was an empiricist, as Smith notes, "the great empiricist principle of 'seeing for yourself' is translated into a public method. Making the entire procedure public means that others can follow along the same path and see whether it leads to the same place."<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

If the method of science is to provide us with a standard of truth which we cannot manipulate according to our individual interests and if it is designed so as to enable us to arrive at conclusions valid for all, we must have a principle of *intersubjectivity*.<sup>367</sup>

This principle of intersubjectivity is integral to Peirce and, consequently, to all of his pragmatic successors.<sup>368</sup> As Smith notes, “the source of the inter-subjective principle for Peirce, and for pragmatists generally, is the *method* of empirical inquiry which is binding upon *all* members of the scientific community.”<sup>369</sup>

But it would be a mistake to oversimplify Peirce’s method to merely communal consensus and majority rule.<sup>370</sup> As Smith notes,

Peirce’s community of knowers is no democracy of opinion based on conventional agreement or majority fiat. Instead he thought of the

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<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, 26. Smith does not make it clear whether this principle of “intersubjectivity,” so necessary for Peirce’s method of inquiry, is presumed from the start or acquired over time. As I’ll explore in my discussion of Peirce’s three “counterproductive” methods of inquiry, the principle of intersubjectivity is notorious lacking in all three and, consequently, is viewed as a necessary component of the only productive method (productive of approximating the Truth over the long run). Of interest here is this (and scholars like Anderson and Talisse will note this as well): if Peirce maintained that the Truth was “destined” to be reached by all those who inquire, and if intersubjectivity (indeed, a hyperbolic form of intersubjectivity he called the “unlimited community” of inquirers) is a necessary component of that “destined” arrival at Truth, it would seem to follow that both Truth *and* this hyperbolic intersubjectivity are presumed from the start to be achievable in the long run.

<sup>368</sup> Mead, for example, who focuses on social behaviorism, for example, or Dewey who aims to undermine the notion of “atomic” or “rugged” individualism and replace it with a more dynamic form of social individualism.

<sup>369</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 26.

<sup>370</sup> Peirce rarely explicitly mentioned the “majority” belief in terms of his method of inquiry. Implicitly, however, we can see its presence within the “method of authority” as I believe Smith is drawing our attention to here: simply because the authority dictates some belief is “true” for a populace does not make it so. The belief may be true *and* the authority proliferates that belief, but the belief is not true *because* the authority proliferates said belief. To draw an analogy to Plato’s *Euthyphro*, just as Socrates critiqued Euthyphro’s potential definition of “piety” as that which all the gods love is pious, Socrates notes that something does not *become* pious simply by being loved by the authority but, conversely (and ideally), the authority ought to love that which is pious *because* it is pious. Peirce’s method of inquiry was meant to discover Truth independent of any majority belief proliferated under the method of authority, to either verify it or refute it via a method distinct from the method of authority, itself. The issue of the majority belief becomes exponentially more complex within the method of inquiry itself for Peirce must guard against the community of inquirers merely taking the place of the totalitarian authority: within a milieu without blockades to inquiry, all voices ought to be heard, and none silenced *a priori* merely because they do not align with the accepted majority belief (forged of actual inquiry). Peirce’s fallibilism insisted that even the strongest and longest held beliefs are, in principle, open to revision and such a minority voice might be just the thing to create the requisite doubt to instigate inquiry once more.

community itself as *destined* to arrive at settled opinion if its members continued to follow the path of empirical method. This is his version of the famous ‘long run’ idea which played an important role in pragmatic thinking. Truth and reality are the limits to which the opinion of the community must converge. The community is under a constraint beyond itself; it is subject to the dictates of ‘reality,’ but no individual or even community of individuals has *immediate* access to that reality. It must be approached through the method...and the faithful prosecution of this method will lead to a convergence of opinion.<sup>371</sup>

The fundamental agreement between members of the community of inquirers must be based on more than sheer consensus since, too, a certain “consensus” exists in a totalitarian state where all members are forced to believe whatever is conducive to the power interests hold on power.<sup>372</sup> As DeMarco notes, “further unification of thought in agreement, Peirce claims, is inherent in the nature of the thought process. He believes that final agreement on any single issue is destined to be reached.”<sup>373</sup> Since the process of inquiry is used, communally, “over and over again they would perfected, being self corrective, and thus truth will be reached. Thus, Peirce is confident that the community will stand as the definition of all reality.”<sup>374</sup>

Peirce noted that, given enough time (in the long run, as it were), the community of inquirers were “destined” to arrive at the Truth. But in noting the lack of “immediate” access to such a reality, Peirce holds off from committing to metaphysical realism. In our previous example of object X, Peirce would, therefore, suggest that there really is, in reality, some object X that we have no immediate access to, nor can ever be completely known due to the fallible nature of the inquirers in general, but that this X operates as a

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<sup>371</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 29.

<sup>372</sup> Reflected in Peirce’s critique of the “method of authority” in “Fixation.”

<sup>373</sup> Joseph DeMarco, “Peirce’s Concept of Community: Its Development & Change,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 4, no. 7 (Winter 1971): 24 – 36, 27.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*

beacon or magnet (or, as De Waal calls it, “a truly centripetal force upon our thoughts”<sup>375</sup>) drawing the community towards it in an asymptotic, true, but ever developing understanding of its meaning and existence, manifest primarily as “Secondness,” the brute facticity of the external world experience, often, as “tension” or “resistance.” Smith explains further:

In one sense, the community does define both truth and reality, for we have no access to either except through its co-operative efforts. Finite thinkers have no infallible rule of certainty. We may be condemned to have no more than what the community of knowers can attain and its results may seem poor indeed, but there is no other way and no further alternative; the other ways of fixing belief are even more precarious. On the other hand, the community of knowers does not define truth and reality by fiat; its members are under constraint from beyond their private selves, and the method which guides their activity is at the same time the extra-human standard which keeps them from entering their private opinions and predilections in the book of knowledge.<sup>376</sup>

The achieved objective of inquiry by the community is more than mere consensus or majority fiat but is, instead, achieved through a cooperative, self-correcting method that engages in communal transactin with an encountered environment. As De Waal notes, “Peirce acknowledged that there might be important questions that remain, in the end, unanswered. But that does not take away the need that should always proceed,”<sup>377</sup> as Peirce himself said, on the “*hope* that the particular question into which we are inquiring is susceptible of an approximate answer in a reasonable<sup>378</sup> time.”<sup>379</sup>

Meyers summarizes the complementary nature of Peirce’s idealism and realism succinctly, drawing together the various themes we’ve explored throughout this analysis:

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<sup>375</sup> De Waal, *On Pragmatism*, *Op. Cit.*, 15

<sup>376</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 29

<sup>377</sup> De Waal, *On Pragmatism*, *Op. Cit.*, 15

<sup>378</sup> Or, perhaps, better still, Peirce ought to have said “indefinite” time

<sup>379</sup> Peirce in Richard Robin, *Annotated Catalogue of the Papers of Charles S. Peirce* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1964), 422:16.

The problem traditionally is that, if we go too far in making the real independent, we run the risk of making it incognizable. Peirce is aware of this, and, as a result, holds that independence is only a partial characterization of reality. Based on the pragmatic theory of meaning, he proposes to supplement it with the doctrine that ‘The opinion which is fated to be ultimated agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is real’ (5.407, 1878). This preserves the notion that reality is independent of you or me or any finite number of humans, but it does not lead us to an unknowable since the real can be shown to depend on long-run thought, i.e. on the ultimate community. What we have here is a compromise. The real is independent, but it is not independent of the infinite community of the future; it is just independent of you or me or any finite number of minds. It is thus ultimate dependent on mind, and so the doctrine is a version of existential idealism rather than realism. [Yet], the source of the idealism here is Peirce’s pragmatic stricture on reality, namely, that the real is the result of the ultimate community; it should come as no surprise then that problems defending this pragmatic account tended to push him toward realism.<sup>380</sup>

Ultimately, as Almeder right notes, though a great “number of Peirce scholars...simply choose one criterion over the other,”<sup>381</sup> I believe the solution lies somewhere in between traditional notions of “idealism” and “realism” precisely because Peirce’s conception of “Reality” was anything but “traditional.”

It is my contention that Peirce was neither a metaphysical realist (in the epistemological sense of postulating a mind-independent Reality with a determinate nature of its own) nor a traditional idealist. Peirce neither believed that Reality was wholly discovered (he eschewed all “spectator” theories of knowledge) nor was Reality wholly constructed through inquiry (as if consensus actually *determined* what things *are*). Consequently, I maintain that Peirce had neither a correspondence nor a consensus theory of Truth, at least in so far as they are traditionally conceived.

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<sup>380</sup> Robert G. Meyers, “Peirce’s Doubts about Idealism,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 21, no. 2 (Spring 1985): 223 – 239, 225 – 226.

<sup>381</sup> Almeder, “Charles Peirce and the Existence of the External World,” *Op. Cit.*, 64.

If I had to provide Peirce with a “label” for his metaphysical-qua-epistemological commitments, it would be this: Peirce was an “objective phenomenological idealist.” So far there is nothing particularly controversial about such a reading since Peirce *had* a phenomenology and called *himself* an objective idealist.<sup>382</sup> Peirce’s theory was phenomenological insofar as *all* human experience occurs through the three, basic phenomenological categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. Humans are *limited* to their semiotic-cum-phenomenological experience of the world. Peirce was an idealist insofar as our beliefs *do* contribute to how Reality is structured. But he was an “objectivist” in the sense that our beliefs, as he says, are determined by nothing human: we *cannot* believe anything we want if we adopt the method of inquiry, but our beliefs must conform, to no small degree, to the existence of the raw stuff of the world that is the way it is regardless of you, I, or any finite number of individuals have to say about it.

The key to this interpretation of Peirce’s commitments lies in his distinction between the phenomenological categories of Secondness and Thirdness. This distinction, I argue, is also central to many *misinterpretations* of Peirce by his critics and will become important to my discussion of the Frankfurt School’s critiques of pragmatism.

“Reality,” for Peirce, was, as we’ve seen, a highly nuanced term. What metaphysical realists (in an epistemological sense) traditionally *mean* by “Reality” is that which is independent of human cognition with a determine nature of its own and has more in common with Peirce’s conception of Secondness, that is, with his phenomenological category of “existence” and “resistance.” “Reality” or “Nature,” for Peirce, fall into the category of Thirdness and had a very different denotation.<sup>383</sup> Let me

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<sup>382</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.25.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.173

begin by offering the following diagrammatic to clearly illustrate my interpretation of Peirce's three categories of phenomenological experience and how they inform my reading of his metaphysical-qua-epistemological commitments:

(1) Beliefs  $\rightarrow$  (2) Existence  $\rightarrow$  (3) Reality

As we recall, our beliefs are laden with nascent expectations. As “guiding principles,” our beliefs are hypotheses with expected conclusions. If they are “true beliefs” they pass unproblematically through “existence” (the category of doubt, tension, resistance) to terminate in our conception of Reality.<sup>384</sup> “Existence,” the experience of interaction with the brute facticity of the encountered world, is barely recognized as anything more than the most evanescent and transitory “blip” in our cognitive apparatus. If, however, they prove to be “false beliefs,” the beliefs will run headlong into the existence of the external world like a car plowing into a brick wall: we’ll be forced to reformulate those beliefs that fail to lead us to the expected conclusions. In that moment of cognitive dissonance, part of “Reality” itself becomes nebulous, uncertain, and problematic, instilling in us a repugnant sense of “doubt” that stimulates us to inquire further precisely because our very *Reality* is in jeopardy (in the schema above, we have failed to get past (2) in order to arrive at (3) and have to return to (1)).

What determines the veracity of our beliefs (whether they be “true” or “false”) is not a failure of our beliefs to “correspond” to “Reality.” Rather (and this is key), it is a failure of our beliefs to lead unproblematically *through* existence to *construct* Reality. As

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<sup>384</sup> “Termination” in the sense of a single cycle of inquiry. Thirdness, our conception of Reality, thus *becomes* the foundation of our new beliefs, our *new* guiding principles.

Peirce said, although “Thirdness cannot be understood without Secondness” (our conception of Reality cannot be divorced from the externality we experience) “Secondness cannot compass Thirdness”<sup>385</sup> (Reality is not reducible to externality *only*). “Reality,” as Thirdness, is the combination of the both Firstness and Secondness, namely, a combination of our beliefs and the existence we encounter. Indeed, “Secondness is so inferior to Thirdness as to be in that aspect quite in a different world” for “even in the most degenerate form of Thirdness, and thirdness has two grades of degeneracy, something may be detected which is not mere secondness. If you take any ordinary triadic relation, you will always find a mental element in it. Brute action is secondness, any mentality involves thirdness.”<sup>386</sup> As Peirce said:

Now Reality is an affair of Thirdness as Thirdness, that is, in its mediation between Secondness and Firstness. Most, if not all of you, are, I doubt not, Nominalists; and I beg you will not take offence at a truth which is just as plain and undeniable to me as is the truth that children do not understand human life. To be a nominalist consists in the undeveloped state in one's mind of the apprehension of Thirdness as Thirdness. The remedy for it consists in allowing ideas of human life to play a greater part in one's philosophy. Metaphysics is the science of Reality.<sup>387</sup>

There are both *objective* and *subjective* components to each of the three phenomenological categories. Firstness is the category of our *subjective* beliefs, true, but they are beliefs forged of previous inquiries that, themselves, interacted with an *objective* environment. So, too, are our beliefs objective in another sense: they are forged through our participation in our communities and thus extend beyond merely what *I*, subjectively, may believe. Secondness is the experience of our beliefs (which are already both subjective *and* objective in the aforementioned sense) interacting with existent externality

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<sup>385</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.331.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.121.



as it is encountered. *What* is encountered is determined in no small part *by* our beliefs, that is, our expectations of what we will find and the conclusions we expect in our beliefs, and thus there is a subjective component of Secondness (a subjectivity already tinged with objectivity in Firstness). But we cannot believe just anything we wish to believe if we earnestly adopt the method of inquiry: we will encounter a tension, resistance and recalcitrance that is wholly undetermined by our beliefs (as if the belief that fire will not burn us can be maintained for longer than the few seconds it takes for fire to do its objective work on our flesh). Thus, though existence (Secondness) is partially determined by nothing human, that is, has a determinate nature of its own independent of our beliefs about it, it is *also* partially the transaction *of* our beliefs (Firstness) *with* that encountered existence, making Secondness at least *partially* determined by the inquirers themselves (therefore, this existence of externality does not exclusively have a determine nature of its own independent of inquiring minds).<sup>388</sup> Lastly, Thirdness is the Reality we *construct* in inquiry: our beliefs (Firstness) have lead unproblematically through encountered existence (Secondness). However, Thirdness (Reality) is not *wholly* constructed by our beliefs. If Firstness (a coordination of subjectivity and objectivity) and Secondness (another coordination of subjectivity and objectivity) are combined to construct Reality (Thirdness), then a substantial *part* of that “constructed” Reality is based on *discovery* and *objectivity*. Reality cannot be whatever we *want* it to be.

Thus, objectivity runs throughout each of the three phenomenological categories of experience, culminating in a Reality that is neither wholly constructed nor wholly

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<sup>388</sup> As Brent notes, Peirce may well have been influenced by Thomas Reid who “proposed that, while the existence of external objects is mediated in the mind, sensation, as the raw data of experience, is given directly and undeniably by physical objects,” Brent, *Charles S. Peirce: A Life, Op. Cit.*, 52.

discovered. There is no “correspondence” between belief and Reality but nor is there merely “consensus.” If consensus determined the Truth about that Reality, it would require no objective component of inquiry and whatever we, communally, decide *is* the fact of the matter, thereby *becomes* the fact of the matter, as if the earth being spherical is a *product* of consensus rather than the consensus that the world is round is a *product* of the world *actually being* round, independent of what you, I, or any finite number of inquirers has to say about it. The only “hint” of correspondence lies in Secondness (existence, that is, not “Reality”) wherein our beliefs, if true, will “correspond” to the existence we encounter so perfectly that no resistance, tension, or recalcitrance is encountered worthy of our attention. A failure of this “correspondence” results in a false belief that must, immediately, be reformulated. The only “hint” of consensus lies in Thirdness (Reality, as Peirce conceives it) wherein a consensus of beliefs between different inquiring parties is a good *criterion* that Truth, to a relative degree, has been achieved but is not, itself, grounds for Truth.

## Chapter 3

### The Formation of Belief

In “Fixation of Belief,” Peirce explored four methods of belief formation that I’ve already alluded to in passing: tenacity, authority, *a priority*, and the scientific method of inquiry. Each of the three counterproductive methods, in their own way, was a critique of dogmatism and a continuation of his adamant stance of fallibilism stemming from his unbridled disgust with any obstacle that blocks the way of further inquiry.

Like Descartes, Peirce framed his exploration of inquiry as an oscillation between doubt and belief. But unlike Descartes, as I’ve discussed already, Peirce did not begin with universal doubt but with universal *belief*, that is, to assume that one’s overall pool of beliefs are true (“it is most likely that we do know them [i.e., things as they really are] in numberless cases”<sup>389</sup>) but that any *one* of those beliefs may be called into doubt and none beyond the possibility of revision (“we can never be absolutely certain of doing so in any special case”<sup>390</sup>). When a problem presents itself, a specific belief is challenged and is thrown into doubt, a state so repugnant to the human organism (“an uneasy and dissatisfied state from which we struggle to free ourselves and pass into the state of belief”<sup>391</sup>) that inquiry (deploying the abductive, deductive, and inductive applications of

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<sup>389</sup> Charles S. Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, 8 Volumes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931 – 1936), CP 5.311. I will use the standard designation “CP” from here on to indicate the use of this text.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.372.

logic) is immediately engaged until some viable resolution is achieved and a new belief is forged (either a different belief or the “same” belief strengthened by the overcoming of the problem).

However, precisely because of doubt’s “uneasiness,” individuals often take the path of least resistance: if a state of belief is a “calm and satisfactory state which we do not wish to avoid,”<sup>392</sup> then the fastest way in which to find oneself *in* a state of belief is to “cling tenaciously, not merely to believing, but to believing just what we believe.”<sup>393</sup> In short, to avoid, at all costs, the problematic situations that would give rise to doubts in our minds. We merely find ourselves “constantly reiterating it to ourselves, dwelling on all which may conduce to that belief, and learning to turn with contempt and hatred from anything that might disturb it.”<sup>394</sup> “This simple and direct method...pursued by many men,”<sup>395</sup> involves acknowledging a belief, “constantly reiterating it to ourselves, dwelling on all which may conduce to that belief, and learning to turn with contempt and hatred from anything that might disturb it.”<sup>396</sup> Motivated by an “instinctive dislike of an undecided state of mind, exaggerated into a vague dread of doubt, makes men cling spasmodically to the views they already take.”<sup>397</sup>

Although impartial environmental (external) factors often create or contribute to the problems our beliefs face (“as if a man should resolutely continue to believe that fire would not burn him”<sup>398</sup>), so, too, does basic human interaction: my beliefs may be thrown into doubt when I encounter an individual (one that I acknowledge and respect,

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<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.377.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*

especially) with a different belief than the one I maintain on a given subject. Peirce provided a practical example: “I remember once being entreated not to read a certain newspaper lest it might change my opinion on free-trade.”<sup>399</sup> If I, for example, have a certain liberal or democratic leaning, I encourage myself not to listen to the media programs for a conservative or republican base (a desire to avoid raising my ire, perhaps, or a fear of having my own beliefs disrupted). Granted, by relying upon this method, Peirce acknowledged that it *will* lead to a certain “peace of mind”<sup>400</sup> (as any state of belief brings), but in blockading social avenues that would otherwise disrupt my beliefs by throwing them into doubt, I will likewise never inquire, never reach a resolution, and thus never intellectually develop. Like “when an ostrich buries its head in the sand as danger approaches, it very likely takes the happiest course. It hides the danger, and then calmly says there is no danger; and, if it feels perfectly sure there is none, why should it raise its head to see?”<sup>401</sup> As De Waal says, “the first and most primitive method is the method of tenacity. On this method, opinion is settled purely by obstinately holding on to one’s beliefs with all one’s might.”<sup>402</sup> This correlates with Peirce’s earlier example of being warned off reading a certain newspaper by a colleague in that, like the ostrich, Peirce could have chosen to bury his head in only newspaper articles that reflect his current belief, ignoring those to the contrary, but in no way does that mean that the potential problems that contrary newspaper may have contained “vanish.”

But this method for fixing belief, which may be called the method of tenacity, will be unable to hold its ground in practice. The social impulse is against it. The man who adopts it will find that other men think differently from him, and it will be apt to occur to him, in some saner

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<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>402</sup> Cornelis De Waal, *On Pragmatism* (San Jose, California: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 12.

moment, that their opinions are quite as good as his own, and this will shake his confidence in his belief.<sup>403</sup>

Perhaps stemming from his early experiences with the Coast Survey, the Metaphysical Club, or any number of consortiums of great minds of which he had been a member, Peirce knew all too well the significance of the “social impulse” and the critical dimension of “Otherness” in belief formation. The tenacious individual will inevitably run into an Other, and “unless we make ourselves hermits, we shall necessarily influence each other’s opinions.”<sup>404</sup> The realization that “another man’s thought or sentiment may be equivalent to one’s own,”<sup>405</sup> is the problem that leads to doubt that, in turn, leads to the unfolding of inquiry and cognitive development. Here is your Socratic “gadfly,” stinging the tenacious individual into cognitive motion. Thus, as De Waal notes, this first method “only works up to a point. Our confidence in our own beliefs is too easily shaken when interacting with others, or when we are confronted with brute facts.”<sup>406</sup>

Note, however, that Peirce was not advocating the method of tenacity’s abandonment in favor of a *prescribed* method of inquiry like a doctor changing a patient’s medications. Peirce was *describing* inquiry as it really happens and, consequently, *describing* the method of tenacity as the type of blockade of inquiry that violates his first rule of reason. Once tenacity crumbles, there’s no cognitive *decision* to take up the method of inquiry, it simply *is* the method that materializes once the obstacle (adhering to the method of tenacity) is dissolved.

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<sup>403</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.378.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>406</sup> De Waal, *On Pragmatism, Op. Cit.*, 12.

If the method of tenacity cannot hold in the long run precisely because it is impossible to isolate oneself wholly from either the “brute facts” of externality which could countermand one’s beliefs, or else run into another individual with a *different* belief, then “the problem becomes how to fix belief, not in the individual merely, but in the community,”<sup>407</sup> bringing us to the second of the counterproductive methods which Peirce called “the method of authority.” If the ultimate downfall of the method of tenacity lay in renewed dialogical engagement with an Other holding a different belief, then perhaps if we can find a method where *everyone* within a given community has precisely the *same* beliefs, then we don’t need to worry about living a wholly hermetic life: everyone we encounter will have the same beliefs that we have and, thus, no problems would emerge and we can stay, safe and secure, in the “peace of mind” of our initial state of belief. As Peirce said:

Let the will of the state act, then, instead of the individual. Let an institution be created which shall have for its object to keep correct doctrines before the attention of the people, to reiterate them perpetually, and to teach them to the young; having at the same time power to prevent contrary doctrines from being taught, advocated, or expressed.<sup>408</sup>

An “institution” may be created to effectively accomplish what the first method could not by eliminating the problem the method of tenacity ultimately faced: the beliefs of other people. As Talisse notes, “we might say that the method of authority is simply the method of tenacity writ large.”<sup>409</sup> Rather than the individual blockading any conceivable problem (effectively, the beliefs of other people) from transforming that state of belief into a state of doubt and forcing the pragmatic circuit of development to advance, in the

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<sup>407</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.378.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.379.

<sup>409</sup> Robert Talisse, “Towards a Peircean Politics of Inquiry,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 40, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 21 – 28, 23.

method of authority, a governing power or institution does so *for* the individuals within its jurisdiction. As De Waal notes, “the individual no longer needs to shield itself from contrary evidence, as with the method of tenacity, but contrary evidence is here purposely withheld from people by a regulating institution through censorship and the oppression, or even elimination, of so-called subversive elements.”<sup>410</sup>

The institution mentioned in the method of authority has a two-fold procedure of achieving this insidious end. It will, on the one hand, effectively tell its citizens what to believe, reiterating whatever doctrines it deems “correct” over and again and teaching these doctrines to the young. On the other hand, the institution, simultaneous with its forwarding its own doctrines to its people, repels any potentially different doctrines that could undermine their hegemonic dominion over the beliefs of its citizens. In this way, in ensuring all of its citizens effectively believe the same, those that adopt this method of authority are not exposed to the problem that undermined those who adopt the method of tenacity.

The word “adopt” here is a bit problematic. Certainly it may be the case that an individual willingly submits to authority, and thereby actively adopts this method. However, the implication is strong here that, in light of no knowledge of alternative possibilities of discourse or belief, the individuals within the authoritarian society would only “adopt” this method in a nominal sense and it might be more accurate to say that they are “indoctrinated” into simply living with the method of authority as their primary mode of belief formation. Continuing with his profoundly sardonic description of this method of belief formation, Peirce said:

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<sup>410</sup> De Waal, *On Pragmatism, Op. Cit.*, 13.



Let all possible causes of a change of mind be removed from men's apprehensions. Let them be kept ignorant, lest they should learn of some reason to think otherwise than they do. Let their passions be enlisted, so that they may regard private and unusual opinions with hatred and horror. Then, let all men who reject the established belief be terrified into silence. Let the people turn out and tar-and-feather such men, or let inquisitions be made into the manner of thinking of suspected person, and when they are found guilty of forbidden beliefs, let them be subjected to some signal punishment.<sup>411</sup>

Part of the mechanism employed by the institution to invoke this method of authority is not only to keep the populace ignorant of any doctrine that would conflict with whatever it paraded before its citizens but, too, to instill in its citizens something even greater than the “vague dread of an undecided mind” in the method of tenacity: outright hostility towards any member of that populace that would dare to question the status quo by the other members of that same populace. In this way, a mechanism is in place for self-regulation by the citizens themselves, namely, that their hostility towards alternative doctrines, an hostility itself imparted by the institution, will deter even the desire to seek out alternative possibilities for fear of retribution not only from the institution itself but from one's own neighbors. A type of Orwellian dystopia is conjured in the images here of a single institution forwarding a monolithic design of “one truth,” namely, *its* truth, and a populace willingly accepting that “truth” and spying upon one another to ensure that not even one's own neighbors, one's own family, perhaps, would dare undermine that “truth.”

Thus, once again, cognitive progress in the form of the pragmatic circuit of belief formation is unable to get off the ground, as it was in the method of tenacity: without the

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<sup>411</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.379

onset of a problem to disrupt the initial belief, there is no irritation of doubt to stimulate the inquiry requisite for resolution and development.

Yet this is not the end of what Peirce's institution was capable of in terms of ensuring synchronicity of beliefs: "when complete agreement could not otherwise be reached, a general massacre of all who have not thought in a certain way has proved a very effective means of settling opinion in a country."<sup>412</sup>

If it would seem, at first, that this is a mere contrivance conjured through smoke and mirrors of a vision of a totalitarian hegemony that could have no place in waking reality, Peirce granted us an (albeit general) exploration of its historical efficacy. "This method has, from the earliest times, been one of the chief means of upholding correct theological and political doctrines."<sup>413</sup> In Rome, for example, "from the days of Numa Pompilius to those of Pius Nonus. This is the most perfect example in history; but wherever there is a priesthood – and no religion has been without one – this method has been more or less made use of."<sup>414</sup> Indeed, "wherever there is an aristocracy, or a guild, or any association of a class of men whose interests depend...on certain propositions, there will be inevitably found some traces of this natural product of social feeling."<sup>415</sup> His attack is upon any system of power that would adopt this method, be it social, political or religious, accusing each of having, at the very least, "traces" of this method of governance and control, noting that "cruelties always accompany this system; and when

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<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*

it is consistently carried out, they become atrocities of the most horrible kind in the eyes of any rational man.”<sup>416</sup>

Peirce readily acknowledged the superiority of this method for fixing belief for, compared to the method of tenacity which he demonstrated cannot hold in practice even for a single individual for any great period of time, the method of authority has, in fact, been utilized to great success time and again throughout the course of human history.<sup>417</sup> Indeed, the historical fact of its efficacy lead Peirce to a grim (possibly sardonic) outlook on humanity in general as he said, “for the mass of mankind, then, there is perhaps no better method than this. If it is their highest impulse to be intellectual slaves, then slaves they ought to remain.”<sup>418</sup>

And yet, as with the method of tenacity, despite the vast superiority in efficacy that the method of authority maintained, it is ultimately doomed to failure by virtue of its own fundamental principles, if given enough time (in the “long run”). He noted:

But no institution can undertake to regulate opinions upon every subject. Only the most important ones can be attended to, and on the rest men’s minds must be left to the action of natural causes. This imperfection will be no source of weakness so long as men are in such a state of culture that one opinion does not influence another – that is, so long as they cannot put two and two together.<sup>419</sup>

If no institution can “undertake to regulate opinions upon every subject,” it would follow that the pragmatic mechanism for belief formation continues to play out within each individual citizen, though perhaps not on the most “important” issues, presumably those

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<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>417</sup> “In judging this method of fixing belief, which may be called the method of authority, we must, in the first place, allow its...superiority to the method of tenacity. Its success is proportionately greater; and, in fact, it has over and over again worked the most majestic results,” *Ibid.*, CP 5.380.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.381.

that keep the members of the institution in power. As such, the first crack in the armor of the method of authority is revealed: the individual citizens are familiar with the pragmatic circuit of belief formation, the experiencing and overcoming of problems, the irritation of doubt, and the attainment of resolution, just not on the issues of most importance. It would follow, then, that if they are familiar with the process of belief formation through their experience with the lesser issues of every day life, it would require only the experience of that key problem to disrupt one of those all-important beliefs for the method of authority to be undone. As Peirce noted, this is hardly a weakness for the method of authority (as it was the central weakness for the method of tenacity) so long as all of the individuals within a society maintain the same beliefs on these more important topics. Nevertheless, beginning with the familiarity each citizen has with the process of belief formation as Peirce articulated it, all that remains is the ability or opportunity to experience some beliefs distinct from that which the institution forces upon its citizens.

But in the most priest-ridden states some individuals will be found who are raised above that condition. These men possess a wider sort of social feeling; they see that men in other countries and in other ages have held to very different doctrines from those which they themselves have been brought up to believe; and they cannot help seeing that it is the mere accident of their having been taught as they have, and of their having been surrounded with the manners and associations they have, that has caused them to believe as they do and not far differently...thus giving rise to doubts in their minds.<sup>420</sup>

At first, there seems something somewhat occult about the solution, namely, that some unique individuals are capable of this “wider sort of social feeling,” able to somehow sense that that their beliefs are being imparted upon them purposefully by the power interests of the institution. But there is nothing occult in this solution, rather,

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<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*

something all too common: this “wider sort of social feeling” need extend only so far as the realization that the way the current society is structured, namely, the beliefs forced upon the individuals within that polis, are not the same beliefs held by other nations (in space) or even that same community under previous administrations (in time). If the method of tenacity is undermined by the experience of contrary beliefs within one’s own society, and if the method of authority is more efficient precisely because it ensures no two individual’s within that society will have contrary viewpoints, that which undermines the method of authority is that which undermined the method of tenacity, only on a larger scale, available to those with a “wider” socio-political vision. That is to say, if one cannot turn to one’s immediate neighbor for a contrary belief that would problematize his or her own, then one needs simply look to another nation entirely or, failing that, simply one’s own nation’s past for societal structures and beliefs distinct from one’s own. As a result, the institution, to guard against such a possibility, would not only need to (as we’ve seen) employ its two-fold method of ensuring all of its citizens have the exact same beliefs (at least on the “important” issues) as well as demonizing those who would dare transgress that mandate, but would likewise have to find a way to completely isolate the entire nation (in space) and cut off all contact to a nation’s own history (in time). The result would be such an extreme form of national isolationism in conjunction with extreme historical revisionism and rampant censorship.

Another key point developed in the aforementioned passage is that of the distinction between “necessity” and “contingency” in societies governed by some institution adhering to the method of authority. Implicitly, these institutions could only hold such power over its citizens on these key issues if the beliefs they proliferate are

passed off as historically necessary and not merely the contingent construction of *that* institution, in *that* time, in *that* place. If the latter were the case, if they proliferated *contingent* beliefs, then inherent *in* those beliefs would be the tension requisite for their being brought into doubt. That is to say, if the power structures didn't express the beliefs they demanded their populace to uniformly adopt in terms of timeless necessity, but actually presented them as historically contingent, built into any contingent belief is the potential for revisability and the realization that that belief is but one among many and may or may not be the best belief to maintain. That is to say, it represents Peirce's distinction between the chimerical apodictic beliefs of dogmatism vs. the fallibilism of revisable beliefs inherent in pragmatism. Since the construction of contingent (dubitable) beliefs is clearly not the goal of the institution in Peirce's example, we may safely assume that whatever important beliefs were being conveyed to the populace were certainly played off as timelessly necessary, that is, as if they were *not* being actively constructed by those invested interests but were merely being *conveyed* to the populace through the medium of the institution as timeless truths being "discovered" rather than "created." Such a critique would square with my analysis of Peirce's conception of Reality in the previous chapter. Reality is in no small part "constructed" by the community of inquirers for although there *is* an external, objective component *of* inquiry, Reality is not, itself, that external permanence (Secondness) but a Thirdness of flux, potentiality, *in futuro*. The authority would have us believe that Reality *is* stable, actual, and established in the here and now as true, certain, "discovered," and thus, necessary (rather than contingent or in any way created). Peirce made this distinction between contingency and necessity more explicit in saying that these individuals with a wider

social awareness “cannot help seeing that it is the mere accident of their having been taught as they have, and of their having been surrounded with the manners and associations they have, that has caused them to believe as they do and not far differently.”<sup>421</sup>

The ability to look back to the past is central to Peirce’s work in myriad ways.<sup>422</sup> As Brent notes, Peirce, the “historian,” teaches us that “we are practicing semeioticians, whether we know it or not. We study the past to find out what happened and what it meant, using the plethora of signs that was left behind. In studying the past we depend on three kinds of sources or texts: documentary, artifactual, and oral, and combinations of these.”<sup>423</sup> These are precisely the avenues the authority would cut off from the inquiries in the present, not only conditioning the results of inquiry to its own ends but, too, effectively stultifying the ongoing process of inquiry for all who would engage in it by severing that necessary connection with the community of inquirers of the past and their subsequent discoveries.

This pawing off of historical contingency (beliefs created by the institution at a certain time in a certain place) as timeless necessity (beliefs supposedly “discovered” by the institution, that exist independently of the institution, which the institution is merely “transmitting” to its citizens) is a method that has been utilized time and again by institutions attempting to remain in power through the proliferation of beliefs that, invariably, support the continued reign of the institutions in question. One key example

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<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>422</sup> “Peirce devoted a good part of his life as a scholar to historical studies, particularly in science. And he produced metaphysical arguments...that had distinctly historical dimensions. It is not surprising that, as a devotee of Hegel, he should have thought of the truths of metaphysics as requiring the passage of historical time in order to be actualized,” Joseph L. Esposito, “Peirce and the Philosophy of History,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 19, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 155 – 156, 155.

<sup>423</sup> Joseph Brent, “Pursuing Peirce,” in “The Philosophy of C.S. Peirce,” special issue, *Synthese* 106, no. 3, (March 1996): 301 – 322, 303.

of the efficacy of this technique (and the inevitable undermining of the method) can be seen in the historical development of the African-American citizenry from slaves to free participants in America's political system. Let us consider, for example, a sample from *A Tempest*, Amie Césaire's reinterpretation of Shakespeare's classic tale of the slave Caliban and his master, the magus Prospero:

*Prospero, you're a great magician:  
You're an old hand at deception.  
And you lied to me so much,  
About the world, about myself  
That you ended up imposing on me  
An image of myself:  
Underdeveloped, in your words, undercompetent  
That's how you made me see myself!  
And I hate that image . . .  
But now I know you, you old cancer,  
And I also know myself! And I know that one day  
My bare fist, just that,  
Will be enough to crush your world!  
The old world is crumbling down!*<sup>424</sup>

Césaire, one of the most influential voices in the negritude movement, attempted to reestablish a firm black identity in the face of post-colonial racism and an increasingly expanding black Diaspora. As I note elsewhere:

What is so intriguing about the aforementioned passage is that this moment of resistance and disruption presupposes a significant period of time in which the image that Prospero purposively constructed and imposed upon his servant had real efficacy and in a very real sense determined how Caliban identified himself. At some point, Prospero...replaced Caliban's otherwise free, autonomous process of self-determination with an artificially constructed "imago."<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> Amié Césaire, *A Tempest*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2002), 61-62.

<sup>425</sup> Clancy Smith, "Prestidigitation and Racial Oppression: Falsity and the Demystification of Social Manipulation," *Purlieu* 1, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 51 – 69, 62.



The key to Prospero's domination over Caliban (and, consequently, the maintaining of his power) relied upon his implanting in Caliban the belief that Caliban was, *necessarily*,<sup>426</sup> a slave, "undercompetent," and predetermined as precisely what he was. Obfuscating the contingency of such a belief (as something that Prospero constructed), it was pawned off as timeless necessity, making Caliban self-identify with this false self-image or "imago."

This example, artfully created here by Cesaire, is paradigmatic of the attitude constructed in the cultural milieu of early America in which a false sort of necessary belief, namely that blacks were naturally or "inherently" slave-like, was forced upon them in an attempt to maintain their servility and break their desire for something other than what the system established. This is the very heart of Peirce's method of authority.

As Yancy notes:

Within the context of an anti-Black racist world, the lived experience of the Black is under the constant threat of being collapsed into the phenomenological or lived experience of the nigger. Once collapsed into the one-dimensional mode of niggerhood, as it were, it is easy to undergo a certain ontological resignation, a capitulation in the face of a reality whose past, present, and future seem fixed and stacked against any possibility of historical breach.<sup>427</sup>

What Yancy is directing our attention to here is precisely what is reflected in this key aspect of Peirce's method of authority. Supplanting the free, autonomous self-determination of the black individual with the constructed "imago" of "niggerhood," as it was in Cesaire, the individual is duped into believing that he or she is inherently slave-

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<sup>426</sup> The efficacy of the "imago" lies in its manifestation as a belief, proliferated by an authority in a manner akin to Peirce's insights in "Fixation," as necessary and timeless. By this I mean the belief (the imago) couldn't be other than it and those that come to identify with it come to see themselves as pre-determined *as such*. If the belief, itself, held even a hint of contingency in its proliferation, it would come laden with the requisite doubt necessary to challenge it and, if needs be, dissolve it through inquiry.

<sup>427</sup> George Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 109.

like, “undercompetent,” and the result is a certain “ontological resignation” once this belief has been successfully implanted. The imago must necessarily be something timeless, necessary and “essential,” attempting to define the very essence of the black individual as something, as Yancy notes, whose “past, present and future seem fixed and stacked against any possibility of historical breach.” Thus, as in Peirce’s method of authority, we see a set of important beliefs imparted by the institution onto its populace that appears necessary or essential and purposefully obfuscates its contingent origins so as to ensure its efficacy.

Yet, as Yancy notes, “the significant point here is that the needed slippage did occur.”<sup>428</sup> In Caliban’s vehement proclamation that he now sees the once seemingly powerful magus as an “old cancer,” that is, sees past the attempted essentializing of his nature to the truth of the contingency of Prospero’s claims, he is now capable of undermining them and asserting his own will to self-determination and autonomy. For Peirce, to counteract the method of authority, Caliban would need to seek out the beliefs that exist in nations far separated in space or, when possible, look back to his own heritage and the history of his own people as one that was, at one time, not essentially enslaved. Perhaps he had recourse to this through the visitation of the strangers who landed on the island after Prospero’s storm and who carry with them the social practices of a world far removed from his own, a world that could breed fruitful comparison that could be the catalyst for the irritation of doubt requisite for cognitive development and the breaking of these old beliefs.

Thus, “the arbitrary forcing of it [a belief] up others, must, therefore...be given up. A different new method of settling opinions must be adopted, that shall not only

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<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

produce an impulse to believe, but shall also decide what proposition it is which is to be believed.”<sup>429</sup> The method of authority, like that of tenacity, cannot hold in the long run.

In the method of authority, as we saw, beliefs were constructed by the institution as they needed to appear to the populace in order to keep those in power in power. Put another way, the guiding principles and premises with which individuals use to navigate their way through the world are not only warped to suit the interests of the institution but, too, are not autonomously developed by the individuals themselves through processes of communal verification. In short, Peirce’s critique of the method of authority was a critique of “instrumentalism,” broadly construed and as Horkheimer defined it, as the relegation of human cognitive capacities to the role of ascertaining the means to ends prescribed independently of the inquiring individuals themselves. This brings us to the third and final counterproductive method Peirce analyzes here, what he calls the *a priori method*:

Let the action of natural preference be unimpeded, then, and under their influence let men, conversing together and regarding matters in different lights, gradually develop beliefs in harmony with natural causes...the most perfect example of it is to be found in the history of metaphysical philosophy. Systems of this sort have not usually rested upon any observed facts, at least not in any great degree. They have been chiefly adopted because their fundamental propositions seemed ‘agreeable to reason.’<sup>430</sup>

Looking specifically at the problematic in the method of authority in which guiding principles were given by an institution rather than developed for oneself in communal discourse, this third method attempts to improve upon that deficiency by allowing their choice of guiding principles to remain “unimpeded” and allowing, further, the ability for

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<sup>429</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.382.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*

them to converse together and bring together “different lights” to “develop beliefs in harmony with natural causes.” The emphasis here, however, is on fixing those guiding principles, those beliefs, as “fundamental propositions” that are “agreeable to reason” but do not (on the whole) rest on any necessarily “observable facts” and not relying up “dialogue” as such. Peirce continued by fleshing out what he meant by “agreeable to reason” more fully:

This is an apt expression; it does not mean that which agrees with experience, but that which we find ourselves inclined to believe. Plato, for example, finds it agreeable to reason that the distances to the celestial spheres from one another should be proportional to the different lengths of strings which produce harmonious chords. Many philosophers have been led to their main conclusions by considers like this; but this is the lowest and least developed form which the method takes, for it is clear that another man might find Kepler’s theory, that the celestial spheres are proportional to the inscribed and circumscribed spheres of the different regular solids, more agreeable to *his* reason.<sup>431</sup>

Key here is the use of the word “experience.” Peirce’s conception of “experience” is fundamental to his methodology of belief formation. This conception of experience maintains that there is a false dichotomy between the rigid distinctions of rationalism and empiricism, articulating a coordination of aspects of both without succumbing to the foundationalism of either. Here, specifically, by hinting at Descartes and invoking Plato, Peirce was attacking rationalism’s reliance on agreed upon hypotheses as the basis for belief formation in the absence of hard, empirical evidence, those beliefs, as he says, “not usually rested upon any observed facts” are consequently, for Peirce, reduced merely to what premises we are merely inclined to believe.

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<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*

Peirce expressed the superiority<sup>432</sup> of this third method over the previous two. Our instincts to adopt a rational set of beliefs remain unimpeded precisely because we are not burying our proverbial heads in the sand ala the method of tenacity to stifle cognitive growth out of fear of doubt, nor are they impeded by some governing power that dictates our beliefs for us. However, this only amounts to barely more than whatever set of beliefs is most appealing to the individual at the time which may well be discussed openly with others within a society (another difference and advantage of this method over the previous two) but which amounts to little more than some form of instinctual reaction and immediate inclination.<sup>433</sup>

Interesting here was Peirce's use of the term "instinct." Peirce accused those who adopt this method of drawing upon an underdeveloped and unrefined (albeit natural and unimpeded) "instinctual" pull towards one set of propositions over another. But beginning with the unrefined and pre-critical instincts rather than beliefs forged of a rigorous and systematized problematizing,<sup>434</sup> it was a method that was ultimately counterproductive. As he noted, of all three methods, "its failure has been the most manifest."<sup>435</sup>

It makes of inquiry something similar to the development of taste; but taste, unfortunately, is always more or less a matter of fashion, and accordingly metaphysicians have never come to any fixed agreement, but the pendulum has swung backward and forward between a more material and a more spiritual philosophy, from the earliest times to the latest. And

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<sup>432</sup> "This method is far more intellectual and respectable from the point of view of reason than either of the others which we have noticed. Indeed, as long as no better method can be applied, it ought to be followed, since it is then the expression of instinct which must be the ultimate cause of belief in all cases," *Ibid.*, CP 5.383.

<sup>433</sup> Peirce's father, Benjamin, instilled in Peirce "a rigorously critical...attitude and approach to both philosophers and philosophical issues" no doubt informing Peirce's requirement of revisionism in his theory of inquiry and, specifically, his critique of the *a priori* method here. Joseph Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 36.

<sup>434</sup> Which will manifest in the scientific method.

<sup>435</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.383.

so from this, which has been called the *a priori* method, we are driven, in Lord Bacon's phrase, to a true induction.<sup>436</sup>

Peirce attacked the foundationalism of both empiricism and rationalism in their classic forms, a foundationalism forged not from a robust system of beliefs achieved through communal inquiry, but more from an instinctive (that is, unrefined, uncritical) reaction to one set of premises rather than another as a matter of taste. His evidence as to its lack of ultimate efficacy was his appeal to the seemingly unending debate between both epistemological camps.

Smith maintains that though Peirce's philosophical allegiance is "essentially empiricism," it comes with "some subtle and novel twists."<sup>437</sup> For "although Peirce criticized the narrowness of traditional empiricism,<sup>438</sup> he was ready to maintain that our idea of anything is the idea of the sensible effects which it manifests."<sup>439</sup> It is the term "effects" in Smith's analysis that is central and that, ultimately, separates Peirce's empiricism from that of more traditional strains. For the term "effects," as Smith notes:

... points to the *behavior* of the object in question, to the ways in which it will respond when set in relation to other things and especially when it is manipulated in certain predetermined ways designed for the purpose of testing its properties. Instead of regarding the properties of things as inert qualities possessed by them in an essentially timeless way, Peirce wanted to interpret them as effects of interactions.<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>437</sup> John Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 8.

<sup>438</sup> "One's knowledge that this object appears red depends upon an entire web of relations, such as the knowledge of how to apply the predicate red, i.e., the characteristics of redness, and the characteristics of the object which one sees. Thus, there is no intelligible private thought, although there is a subjective element to thought," Elizabeth Cooke, *Peirce's Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 13.

<sup>439</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 8.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*

Rejecting any so-called passive, or “spectator” theories of knowledge, Peirce maintained a dynamic interactivity (or, better still, “transactivity”) between the inquiring organism and its environment. As Rosenthal notes, this rejection of a “spectator” approach to knowledge is a fundamental component in Peirce’s pragmatism, informing many of the major themes we’ll be exploring throughout this investigation:

Peirce, in rejecting the role of man as spectator, in understanding experience as a unity of interaction between man and that facticity which gives itself within experience, can hold at once that the real world is the perceived world, that the real world has an independent from mind, and yet that the perceived world is partially dependent upon the noetic act and is thus relative in its nature to the mind. Indeed, the supposed incompatibility of these three characteristics of the relation of thought to the real world stems from a failure to radically and once and for all reject the presuppositions of a spectator theory of knowledge.<sup>441</sup>

Properties of objects, for Peirce, are not “inert qualities” but are, themselves, the effects of our specific transactions with those objects, responding in predictable (or nonpredictable, depending on the merit of one’s guiding premises) ways. The epistemological implications of this position are profound. As Smith says,

Meaning is being removed from exclusive residence in the ‘mind’ and is now identified with events in the world, including actions which the individual himself may perform. Instead of intuiting directly certain properties or characteristics of things, we are to direct our attention outward to actions and reactions in the physical world, to a series of operations which we can perform for the purpose of seeing how the object in question will behave. The meaning of an idea expressing a property of something will be found in the effects it reveals when we carry out tests.<sup>442</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> Sandra B. Rosenthal, “The Pragmatic World of Charles Peirce,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 19, no. 1 (Winter 1983): 13 – 22, 13. The apparent tension between Peirce’s adoption of a sort of idealism and, concurrently, a sort of metaphysical realism has its genesis here and is a theme I’ll explore throughout the course of this investigation.

<sup>442</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 9.

In short, Peirce modified the traditional empiricist view “by insisting that the sensible qualities of things be understood as dynamic behavior and not as static and timeless qualities.”<sup>443</sup> As Peirce himself noted, “consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception of have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.”<sup>444</sup> Of course, this must not be misunderstood as what effects we find *now*, but all *possible* effects in an unending sequence of future inferences, effectively making the phenomenological experience of the inquirer (ideally, the *community* of inquirers) central to any dynamic conception of “meaning.”<sup>445</sup>

Peirce likewise distanced himself from the prevalent position that the goal of philosophy ought to be theoretical knowledge divorced from practical concerns. As Smith notes, “the human self was conceived, by the empiricists and rationalists alike, as essentially a spectator, and it was taken for granted that the human mind could be understood as an instrument concerned solely with the acquisition of theoretical knowledge.”<sup>446</sup> To further emphasize the revolutionary nature of his philosophy against this spectator-ridden backdrop, Peirce maintained that thought is never in isolation from

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<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>444</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.402

<sup>445</sup> Smith’s reading attempts to distance Peirce from the “cash value” theory of meaning developed by James by highlighting Peirce’s more narrow conception of “true beliefs” (rather than Truth) which are provisional and revisable under the possibility that future information will necessitate their reformulation. The attempt to link a causal theory of meaning (effects) with an inferential theory of meaning is problematic, to say the least, but I believe Smith’s point is this: for Peirce, “meaning” is not a static product of inquiry. Because of the potentially unending sequence of future inferences, bringing with them new information to either reify (and thereby strengthen) initial beliefs or, perhaps, to reformulate them entirely, “present meaning” may be linked to “true beliefs” in the same provisional and revisable sense that I’ve discussed above. Over the long run, as true beliefs are reified or reformulated, asymptotically approximating Truth (ideally), so, too, does the “meaning” of any project of inquiry (the achieved objectives of inquiry) expand and change through inquiry. Just as true beliefs are not static, timeless certainties, nor is the meaning of any object of inquiry static or timeless.

<sup>446</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 11.



practical concerns and inquiry is always contextually situated and driven by the real, living purposes of human beings. As Smith notes,

Peirce started with the conception of man as a being capable of thinking; he started with the concrete individual and with the fact that thinking is always localized and called for on specific occasions within the life span of the self. The *why*, *where*, *when*, and *how* of thinking become essential; thought comes to be understood in terms of its purpose in the life of the thinker himself. The mind is no longer a timeless spectator and its function in thinking is no longer taken as the disinterested pursuit of truth.<sup>447</sup>

Peirce's conception of "belief," especially as it relates to "habit," was a predisposition to *act* in certain ways when novel stimuli are encountered.<sup>448</sup> As Smith notes, for Peirce "thought becomes...the means of producing *belief*" and "belief must lead to action"<sup>449</sup> in precisely the way we explored in Peirce's opening sections of "Fixation." Thus, if the purpose of thought is the construction of belief through the settlement of doubt and resolution of inquiry, and if belief's central function is that it *must* and *does* lead to action, what follows is a robust and dynamic refutation of all spectator theories of knowledge, representative in the passivity of the receptor mind in both traditional strains of rationalism as well as empiricism. Of course, as Peirce explicitly claimed, "but the end of thought is action only in so far as the end of action is another thought,"<sup>450</sup> thus dissolving the traditional distinction between theory and practice *without* reducing theory *to* practice. For Peirce, the "Theoretical" has its purpose as "simply and solely

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<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>448</sup> I would add that Peirce was not reducing his version of pragmatism to behaviorism (though others in the tradition, perhaps G.H. Mead chief among them, were keen on doing precisely that). Peirce was adamant that although outward behavior (manifest action) played an integral role in his conception of what a belief *was*, nevertheless, the relationship between thought and action were ever reciprocal (see Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.272).

<sup>449</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 11.

<sup>450</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.272.

knowledge of God's truth" whereas the "Practical" be reserved "for the uses of life."<sup>451</sup> As Feibleman notes, "the development of philosophical theory and the applications of such theories to practice, while closely related, should be maintained as two separate and distinct departments of philosophical activity."<sup>452</sup> Indeed, Peirce condemned "with the whole strength of conviction the Hellenic tendency to mingle philosophy [as theory] with practice."<sup>453</sup> The "application of theory to practice," for Peirce, should be "purely for the purpose of verifying or validating theory."<sup>454</sup> As he admitted himself, "the peculiarity of my philosophy is that it leads to positive predictions comparable with observation"<sup>455</sup> for "a theory cannot be sound unless it be susceptible of applications, immediate or remote, whether it be good economy so to apply it or not."<sup>456</sup> Feibleman maintains that Peirce's position on the theory/practice relation is in no small part a "refutation of the contentions of the positivists"<sup>457</sup> and is perhaps best illustrated by his attack on the work of Auguste Comte. This point is key, too, insofar as Peirce was often accused of *being* a positivist, himself, though I would argue, nothing could be further from the truth. As he said:

Auguste Comte...would condemn every theory that was not 'verifiable.' Like the majority of Comte's ideas, this is a bad interpretation of a *truth*. An explanatory hypothesis, that is to say, a conception which does not limit its purpose to enabling the mind to grasp into one [of] a variety of facts, but which seeks to connect those facts with our general conceptions of the universe, ought, in one sense, to be *verifiable*; that is to say, it ought to be little more than a ligament of numberless possible predictions concerning future experience, so that if they fail, it fails.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.239.

<sup>452</sup> James K. Feibleman, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Charles S. Peirce: Interpreted as a System* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970), 288.

<sup>453</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.618

<sup>454</sup> Feibleman, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Charles S. Peirce, Op. Cit.*, 288.

<sup>455</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 2.1.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 2.7.

<sup>457</sup> Feibleman, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Charles S. Peirce, Op. Cit.*, 288.

<sup>458</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.597.

A theory, or “explanatory hypothesis,” seeks to “connect” the facts (the conclusion of inquiry) with those “general conceptions of the universe” (the belief) as “possible predictions concerning future experience.” But it begins with a guess, a hypothesis, an abductive “stab” at the riddle, a creative and imaginative beginning to any inquiry.<sup>459</sup>

Peirce continued:

Thus when Schliemann entertained the hypothesis that there really had been a city of Troy...this meant to his mind among other things that when he should come to make excavations at Hissarlik he would probably find remains of a city with evidences of a civilization more or less answering to the descriptions of the Illiad...thus understood, Comte’s maxim is sound. Nothing but that *is* an explanatory hypothesis. But Comte’s own notion of a *verifiable* hypothesis was that it must not suppose anything that you are not able to directly observe. From such a rule it would be fair to infer that he would permit Mr. Schliemann he was going to find arms and utensils at Hissarlik, but would forbid him to suppose that they were either made or used by any human being, since no such beings could ever be detected by direct percept.<sup>460</sup>

By associating “theory” with belief (or a set of beliefs) as that which guide inquiry and are verified through practical pursuits, rather than a verificationist theory that presupposes the necessity of immediate sense experience of the object of that inquiry, Peirce dissolved some of these positivist problematics. This distinction further holds direct import to Peirce’s exploration of the *a priori* method in question. He noted:

Philosophers there have been who have said that such [and such] a thing is inconceivable; but it is perfectly conceivable to a mind which takes up intelligently and seriously the task of forming the conception. Men who are ready to pronounce a thing impossible before they have seriously studied out the proper way of doing it, and especially without having submitted to a course of training in making the requisite exertion of will, merit contempt. When a man tells us something is inconceivable, he ought to accompany the assertion with a full narrative of all he has done in these

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<sup>459</sup> Peirce will eventually claim that aesthetics and ethics is the foundation for logic in terms of this abductive initial move.

<sup>460</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.597.

two ways to see if it could not be conceived. If he fails to do that, he may be set down as a trifler.<sup>461</sup>

The assumption that anything is *a priori* inconceivable is antithetical to Peirce's theory of belief formation. Further, it is antithetical to the spirit of philosophy as Peirce conceived it, represented by his "first rule of reason" which states that no obstacle should ever be constructed that blocks the way to further inquiry. For Peirce, inquiry itself was inexhaustible, as we noted from his conception of "Truth" as the ideal terminus at the end of a long run of inquiry that we can asymptotically approximate over time. To assume prior to inquiry, or indeed at any point in inquiry, that something is "inconceivable" is to succumb to the type of apodictic certainty (that it cannot be known)<sup>462</sup> that blocks further inquiry from unfolding. How, then, might Peirce address the Comptean attack on Schliemann's inquiry (namely, that though Schliemann may find artifacts which may be directly experienced, the hypothesis cannot be verified since the individuals he supposes crafted such implements are lost to time)? The answer lies in an intriguing distinction Peirce made between what he calls "perfect" and "sure" knowledge, pertinent to his fallibilism as well as his theory of Truth.

Peirce established three criteria for "perfect knowledge," namely, it must "hold for true a proposition that really is true,"<sup>463</sup> it must "be self-satisfied and free from the uneasiness of doubt," and it must be "such that it would be logically impossible that this character should ever belong to satisfaction in a proposition that is not true."<sup>464</sup> In sum, "suppose our opinion with reference to a given question to be quite settled, so that

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<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.274.

<sup>462</sup> Further illuminating the problematic of skepticism, as well, namely, the certainty that we cannot have certainty.

<sup>463</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.605.

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 4.62.

inquiry, no matter how far pushed, has no surprises for us on this point. Then we may be said to have attained *perfect knowledge* about that question.”<sup>465</sup> We may fit this definition into our analysis of the triadic method of belief formation discussed above. Provided we are not utilizing any of the three counter-productive methods of belief formation, “perfect knowledge” would be manifest when all genuine inquiries, no matter how far pushed, would never create the problematic doubt that force those beliefs to be reformulated. This rings of the attained end of the long run of inquiry, the ever-elusive “Truth” absolute and final. However, like “Truth” itself, such “perfect knowledge” is in practice never wholly achievable but may be only approximated and acts as a good indication that, even if inquiry does not end, belief may be safely tabled and assumed true to the best of our knowledge. That isn’t to say it may not one day need to be reevaluated, only that, for the time being, it is as certain as it can possibly be. This brings us to Peirce’s corresponding definition of “sure knowledge”:

Perhaps we have already attained to perfect knowledge about a number of questions; but we cannot have an unshakable opinion that we have attained such perfect knowledge about any given question. That would be not only perfectly to know, but perfectly to know that we do perfectly know, which is what is called *sure knowledge*.<sup>466</sup>

That meta-level of evaluation, that we perfectly know that we perfectly know, violated Peirce’s first rule of reason and would result in the type of apodictic certainty that blocks further inquiry, if only the potential for such should future inquiries lead us to question the “perfect knowledge” we currently *seem* to possess. “Perfect knowledge” may function in our daily inquiries; a belief or set of beliefs that never run into the problematic doubt that would necessitate their reevaluation. “Sure knowledge” would be “perfect

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<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 4.63.

knowledge” of the perfect knowledge of the belief in question that is, like truth itself, only approximated more fully throughout the long run of inquiry. How may this apply to the Comtean demand for direct verifiability? Peirce noted that the “past is the storehouse of all our knowledge,”<sup>467</sup> including those human beings beyond Schliemann’s immediate investigative reach.<sup>468</sup> To this, Peirce provided a lovely response:

I may be asked what I have to say to all the minute facts of history, forgotten never to be recovered, to the lost books of the ancients, to the buried secrets.

‘Full man a gem of purest ray serene  
The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear;  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.’

Do these things not really exist because they are hopelessly beyond the reach of our knowledge? And then, after the universe is dead (according to the predictions of some scientists), and all life ceased forever, will not the shock of atoms continue though there will be no mind to know it? To this I reply that, though in no possible state of knowledge can any number be great enough to express the relation between the amount of what rests unknown to the amount of the known, yet it is unphilosophical to suppose that, with regard to any given question (which has any clear meaning), investigation would not bring forth a solution to it, if it were carried far enough.<sup>469</sup>

The movement towards “perfect” and “sure” knowledge becomes relevant here to Peirce’s critique of the *a priori* method. No matter the difficulties any particular inquiry may present, it must never be admitted *a priori* that there is anything ultimately “incognizable,” that is, beyond the reach of inquiry itself if given sufficient time, at least in principle. As he said, “never allow yourself to think that any definite problem is

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<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.460.

<sup>468</sup> This is also a problem for Descartes who never fully proves the existence of other people let alone allows past inquiries to inform his desire for an apodictic bedrock of certain knowledge.

<sup>469</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.409

incapable of being solved.”<sup>470</sup> To do so would be “unphilosophical,” that is, to admit defeat on *a priori* grounds despite Peirce’s insistence that inquiry itself is never fully exhaustible. As Feibleman notes, for Peirce “the tendency of knowledge is to increase, and of the ultimately irreducible fallibilism to be reduced. Thus does perfect knowledge become surer, if not absolutely sure,”<sup>471</sup> which echoes Peirce’s definition of truth as that “opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate,” despite the fact that “however much we know, more may come to be found out. Hence, all can never be known.”<sup>472</sup> In short, for Peirce, everything was (in principle) cognizable, nothing should be admitted incognizable *a priori*, and even though everything was (in principle) cognizable, nothing is ever *fully* cognized because inquiry, itself, is never wholly exhausted. This sentiment draws together Peirce’s adamant fallibilism with his call to never block the path to further inquiry all in light of his definition of Truth as an ideal to which all inquiry aims and over time better approximates, thereby, as Feibleman notes, making our knowledge “surer” if never “absolutely sure.” As Peirce said:

When we pass from the perusal of works upholding the method of authority to those of the philosophers, we not only find ourselves in a vastly higher intellectual atmosphere, but also in a clearer, freer, brighter and more refreshing moral atmosphere.<sup>473</sup> All this, however, is beside the

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<sup>470</sup> Charles S. Peirce *The Essential Peirce*, edited by Nathan Houser and Chrisian Kloesel, 2 Volumes (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), EP 2:188.

<sup>471</sup> Feibleman, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Charles S. Peirce*, *Op. Cit.*, 210.

<sup>472</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.330

<sup>473</sup> Peirce made an exhaustive study of the normative sciences, of which he insisted that logic was a part, and intimately related to both ethics and aesthetics. As he said, for example: “It is pretty generally admitted that logic is a normative science, that is to say, it not only lays down rules which ought to be, but need not be followed; but it is the analysis of the conditions of attainment of something of which purpose is an essential ingredient. It is, therefore, closely related to an art; from which, however, it differs markedly in that its primary interest lies in understanding those conditions, and only secondarily in aiding the accomplishment of the purpose. Its business is analysis, or, as some writers prefer to say, definition,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.575. Further, “For Normative Science in general being the science of the laws of conformity of things to ends, esthetics considers those things whose ends are to embody qualities of feeling, ethics those things whose ends lie in action, and logic those things whose end is to represent something,” *ibid.*, CP 5.129. For Peirce, there were “good” and “bad” manifestations of “efforts of will” (Ethics), of objects “considered in their presentation” (Aesthetics), and “representations of truth” (Logic),

one significant question of whether the method succeeds in fixing men's opinions. One dare swear they should succeed. But in point of fact, up to date they decidedly do not...the difficulty is that the opinions which today seem most unshakable are found tomorrow to be out of fashion.<sup>474</sup>

Although Peirce readily admitted the vast intellectual and moral superiority of the *a priori* method over the previous two methods, he noted that it suffered from the defect that it continued to fail to fix the opinions of men as the history of epistemology seemed to bear out as the “pendulum” swings from rationalism to empiricism without a decisive victor that all parties (rationalist, empiricist, philosopher and non-philosopher alike) can utilize to coordinate their beliefs in some communal and publicly verifiable manner.

One key problem with *the a priori* method is the coordination of unfounded suppositions and the reliance on information not found in experience which, for Peirce (as with his pragmatic successors) was a communal arena open to all who would inquire into it. For Descartes, the meditator need only be in a locked room, alone, stripped of all of his senses, to arrive at the “Truth” based solely upon an act of introspection. Whatever

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*ibid.*, CP 5.36. Logic “is the theory of **right** reasoning, of what reasoning ought to be, not of what it is,” *ibid.*, CP 2.7, and thus for Peirce, there was a corollation between right conduct (Ethics), right presentation (Aesthetics), and right reasoning (Logic). The three divisions of the Normative Sciences “correspond to my three categories, which in their psychological aspect, appear as Feeling, Reaction, Thought,” *ibid.*, CP 8.256. Firstness is “Feeling” (Aesthetics), Secondness is Reaction and Transaction with the environment and other organisms *in* that environment (Ethics), and Thirdness is Thought (Logic). Just like any manifestation of Peirce’s three categories, none are wholly isolated from the other two: Logic *is*, such as it is, only in so far as it is an admixture of both Aesthetics and Ethics. How we *ought* to think has both an ethical as well as an aesthetic component, for Peirce. Thus, a higher intellectual atmosphere (a more logical world in pursuit of Truth at the end of the long run of inquiry) is, likewise, a more moral atmosphere since the procedure of inquiry (logical deployments of abduction, induction, and deduction) has nascent within it an ethical component: how we *ought* to reason is, in part, a moral question, and the procedure we choose to attain Truth ought to be the best possible method of right reasoning (we *ought* to reason). If the method of how we *ought* to reason leads closer to Truth, and not further from it, for Peirce we have chosen the best possible method of reasoning (and since there are both good and bad methods of reasoning, there is a moral component therein). Ultimately, as Peirce said, “Formal logic, however, is by no means the whole of logic, or even its principal part. It is hardly to be reckoned as a part of logic proper. Logic has to define its aim; and in doing so is even more dependent upon ethics...Logic depends upon mathematics; still more intimately upon ethics,” *ibid.*, CP 4.240.

<sup>474</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.382 Fn P1.



can be thought clearly and distinctly must, necessarily, *be*, for Descartes, which posed a distinct problem for Peirce:

Because he is all the while doubting whether there are any such things as shape and motion, Descartes thinks he must be persuaded that shape and motion do not belong to his nature, or anything else but consciousness. This is taking it for granted that nothing in his nature lies hidden beneath the surface.<sup>475</sup>

All cognitions, for Peirce, were mediated by reference to previous cognitions and reference to the external world. For, as Cooke notes,

The knowledge of 'I exist' is not given to one directly or immediately by intuition, introspection, or any other faculty, but rather is inferred from one's knowledge of the external world. And knowledge of the external world is always inferred and mediated, rather than immediately given. The faculty of intuition is simply not needed to explain how the individual comes to know that he exists.<sup>476</sup>

Peirce, in fact, offered an alternative, empirical explanation as to how an individual comes to know his or her own existence.<sup>477</sup> Further, although Descartes noted that volitions, affects, and ideas were all immediately known and, to a certain degree, absolutely certain without appeal to the external world (for whether or not a unicorn exists in reality it remains true that the thought-image [idea] is occurring to the meditator), not even these sorts of thought are immune to Peirce's critique. Even

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<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>476</sup> Cooke, *Peirce's Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry, Op. Cit.*, 11.

<sup>477</sup> "Peirce offers an alternative explanation in which a child learns that he exists as something separate from the things which he acts upon. And he learns this when he realizes his own error. Beforehand, he goes around in the world thinking that things are fit to be moved rather than that he, a separate thing, wants or wills them to be moved. But at a certain point the child realizes that there is a difference between testimony and the appearances themselves, and, in particular, when he realizes that the testimony is confirmed, contrary to what appeared to be the case at first. Once he realizes his own error, he must suppose a self to which he can attribute the error. It is around the time that children understand ignorance and error that they learn to distinguish their private selves from the rest of the world. So here Peirce actually argues that the 'I,' rather than being based in an indubitable intuition, is actually inferred from one of our first mistakes," *Ibid.*, 11 – 12.

emotions, like anger, are never completely separated from the external world and verified wholly by appeal to thought alone. As Peirce said, “his anger consists in his saying to himself, ‘this thing is vile, abominable, etc.’”<sup>478</sup> As Cooke explains,

One might think that emotions serve as counter-examples since they do not appear as predicates, but are referable to the mind alone. But Peirce explains that even an emotion is a predication concerning some external object. For example, one man’s anger implies that there is something in the external world which makes him angry.<sup>479</sup>

Volitions, sensations, emotions of all kinds, as well judgments all succumb to the same critique.<sup>480</sup> As Peirce noted:

When our nervous system is excited in a complicated way, there being a relation between the elements of the excitation, the result is a single harmonious disturbance which I call an emotion. Thus, the various sounds made by the instruments of an orchestra strike upon the ear, and the result is a peculiar musical emotion, quite distinct from the sounds themselves. This emotion is essentially the same thing as an hypothetic inference, and every hypothetic inference involves the formation of such an emotion.<sup>481</sup>

Secondness (as I argued, a coordination of both subjective and objective qualities) accounts for the external component of emotion to some degree. Secondness is the tension<sup>482</sup> experienced as our beliefs run into some obstacle on their way to terminating in

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<sup>478</sup> Charles S. Peirce, *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition*, edited by the Peirce Edition Project (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1982 – Ongoing), W2:206.

<sup>479</sup> Cooke, *Peirce’s Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, *Op. Cit.*, 14.

<sup>480</sup> “Even in the case of willing, the power of introspection need not be presupposed since willing is nothing but the power of concentrating the attention, of abstracting (W2:207). And abstraction too is a form of inference based on judgments referring to the external world. Thus sensation, emotion, and willing involve judgments which are known and justified by appealing to our knowledge of the external world,” *Ibid.*

<sup>481</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 2.643. An emotion then, for Peirce, was more than an immediate cognitive affair, but a complex relation between the different elements of experience (all three categories are present), incorporating feeling, reaction to environmental stimuli, and the cognitive component of thought found in Thirdness. Rather than reducing the emotion to Thirdness (cognition) only, Peirce maintained that, precisely because no Thirdness is wholly divorced from the other two categories of experience, there was a component of externality (the stimuli) likewise present in the emotion.

<sup>482</sup> For Peirce, “Secondness is an idea of fact, struggle...it is the shock of reaction between ego and non-ego,” Jeffrey R. DiLeo, “Peirce’s Haecceitism,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 27, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 79 – 109, 89.

an expected conclusion. In a sense, it represents the problematic that acts as the impetus for cognitive development, the stage of “doubt” in the cyclical process. But it need not be “problematic” in the most common sense of the term for, too, it may simply be that which draws our attention to some specific facet of the world. Thus, “everything in which we take the least interest creates in us its own particular emotion, however slight this may be. This emotion is a sign and a predicate of the thing.”<sup>483</sup> As Feibleman notes, “emotion, then, is an energetic reaction to some outward object, or to some quality of an outward object, which is capable of arousing an energetic interpretant.”<sup>484</sup> By way of example:

If a man is angry, his anger implies, in general, no determinate and constant character in its object. But, on the other hand, it can hardly be questioned that there is some relative character in the outward thing which makes him angry, and a little reflection will serve to show that his anger consists in his saying to himself, ‘this thing is vile, abominable, etc.,’ and that it is rather a mark of returning to reason to say, ‘I am angry.’ In the same way any emotion is a predicate of some object.<sup>485</sup>

Nor was Peirce overly impressed with Descartes’ proofs for the existence of God which operate along similar lines.<sup>486</sup> There was something too fickle and transitory in this method of fixing belief that has proven historically unsatisfactory and rings too much of matters of taste and passing fancy born of instinctual leanings in one direction rather than another. To further refute criticism of this controversial position, he noted:

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<sup>483</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.308. The “thing” here is ambiguous, but may be referring to the object of external stimuli that participates in the experience as a whole (where Thirdness is the cognitive component of the emotion, not the emotion in its entirety).

<sup>484</sup> Feibleman, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Charles S. Peirce*, *Op. Cit.*, 251.

<sup>485</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.247.

<sup>486</sup> “Next, Descartes asks the doubter to remark that he has the idea of a Being, in the highest degree...now a Being would not have these qualities unless he existed necessarily and eternally. By existing necessarily he means existing by virtue of the existence of the idea. Consequently, all doubt as to the existence of this Being must cease. This plainly supposes that belief is to be fixed by what men find in their minds...He gives two further proofs for God’s existence. Descartes makes God easier to know than anything else; for whatever we think He is, He is. He fails to remark that this is precisely the definition of a figment...I may remark that the world has pretty thoroughly deliberated upon that theory and has quite distinctly come to the conclusion that it is utter nonsense,” *Ibid.*, CP 5.382 Fn P1.

Many critics have told me that I misrepresent the *a priori* philosophers, when I represent them as adopting whatever opinion there seems to be a natural inclination to adopt. But nobody can say the above does not accurately define the position of Descartes, and upon what does he repose except natural ways of thinking?<sup>487</sup>

Instincts are unlike beliefs in that they are pre-refined proto-beliefs (if you will) that are prior to the pragmatic circuit of belief formation as articulated by Peirce. In a sense, the *a priori* philosophers fabricate what they maintain is an instinctual, natural way of thinking into an entire philosophical system rather than form that philosophical system on the basis of a refined belief having been refined through dialogical engagement, communal inquiry, and public verification which (as we'll see) will create the heart of the fourth and final of Peirce's methods of fixing belief. As Smith notes:

Descartes believed that the human mind is a wholly theoretical instrument, that it is capable of operating out of context, and that it can apprehend the naked character of things independently of the desires and interests of the self who owns it. Allied with this belief is the further belief that meaning is a *wholly intuitive affair*, that we just "grasp" meanings without the aid of language or other symbolic devices.<sup>488</sup>

By tying the function of thought into the production of beliefs that necessarily guide actions, Peirce clearly rejected the first principle, namely, that the human mind is a wholly theoretical instrument divorced from our practical concerns. As Smith notes:

Life, insofar as it is informed by conscious experience, is a dynamic interplay of belief, doubt, inquiry and action. When we fail to grasp the truth or are inept in the carrying out of our aims, we find ourselves thrown into a state of confusion; our minds are not at rest and we are unsure about

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<sup>487</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>488</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy, Op. Cit.*, 7. This seems somewhat inconsistent with the aforementioned point that the *a priori* philosophers fabricated a "natural way of thinking." I take Smith's point to be, however, that the apprehension of things as they really are is part of this "natural way of thinking," perhaps a naïve sort of common-sensism. This is a contentious point, however, as philosophers like Husserl, for example, distinguished between the "natural attitude" and the essences of things as they are only after a phenomenological reduction of that very same attitude.

what to do. The whole logical apparatus of man comes into play in order to cope with the situation.<sup>489</sup>

Further, it was impossible, for Peirce, for our previous operations of thought, which necessarily occur in an infinite continua (a principle he called “synechism”<sup>490</sup>) and all new beliefs are only and ever forged of old beliefs suitably problematized and thrown into doubt, to be wholly divorced from our “desires” and “interests” at the time of inquiry, though certainly this was, at least, what Descartes thought he was doing. Lastly, Peirce rejected the possibility that Truth can be “grasped” intuitively and directly without the aid of a mediating force of language and signs. As Smith notes:

He did not believe that our minds can function apart from our own selves, our interests and our plans, and he did not accept the view that thinking takes place in a vacuum or that it has nothing to do with the circumstances giving rise to reflective thought. In addition, he had doubts about our power to grasp meanings *intuitively* without dependence upon language and signs. Peirce’s pragmatic theory of meaning was directed against Descartes’ reliance upon immediacy as the sure road to clarity, and his theory of belief was directed against the Cartesian view that reason operates in a vacuum.<sup>491</sup>

Thus, in a significant way, Peirce’s rejection of Cartesianism is the heart of his theory of meaning and belief and, consequently, as we’ve explored previously, the heart of his pragmatism and certainly the underlying counterproductivity of this third method of fixing belief. For, as Cooke notes, “the reason that taking individual subjects as the ‘absolute judges of truth’ cannot work as a criterion for progress is that there is no way to handle disagreement. Metaphysicians can never agree on just what is absolutely certain,

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<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 – 21.

<sup>490</sup> “The word synechism is the English form of the Greek {synechismos}, from {synechés}, continuous,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.565.

<sup>491</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 8.

self-evident, or indubitable for the individual subject”<sup>492</sup> just as Peirce noted in his articulation of the perpetual pendulum swing between rationalists and empiricists. His solution was to dissolve the notions of absolute certainty, self-evident knowledge and indubitable truths altogether.

Indeed, one of the primary reasons Peirce rejected the *a priori* method was a fundamental logical fallacy at its base. As Cooke notes,

Peirce says one might be tempted to argue that humans have the intuitive ability to judge that they have an intuition because they *feel* it. A cognition present in the mind feels as if it is immediately given by something other than another cognition. But to argue that humans have this faculty based on this feeling is to beg the question since it presupposes the very faculty Peirce is calling into question.<sup>493</sup>

The “feeling” may *seem* to present itself as “immediate” (as with Peirce’s notion of Firstness) but every Firstness is borne of a previous Thirdness which is a necessarily communal facet of inquiry (the laws, uniformities, and reality communally constituted through one of the four methods of belief formation), thus our feelings may be ingrained in us just as readily through processes of indoctrination and education as any other source. As Cooke notes, “for all we know, the feeling may come from education or an old association.”<sup>494</sup> Lastly, there is the problem of infinite regress, a logical appeal that Peirce, as a logician and semiotician, could clearly not stomach. As Cooke notes, “the further problem with the appeal to feeling is that one must ask whether this feeling itself

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<sup>492</sup> Cooke, *Peirce’s Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, *Op. Cit.*, 7.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*, 10. It should be noted that “begging the question” might be a bit strong: they are not so much begging the question but simply not asking it. Peirce, however, did.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*

is infallible, and then ask whether the judgment that the feeling is infallible is infallible, *ad infinitum*.”<sup>495</sup>

As Rockmore rightly notes, Peirce “denies truth in the sense that *truth* means the direct, or even the indirect, grasp of independent reality.”<sup>496</sup> As Cooke notes,

Peirce shows us that the *mind actively constructs what seems to be given in intuition*. And the individual cannot discover the difference between what seems presented to him from outside the mind and what is determined by a previous cognition merely by internal examination of the contents of mind.<sup>497</sup>

Ultimately, Peirce’s rejection of the *a priori* method was a forwarding of his own unique brand of phenomenology that he called “phaneroscopy,” for as Smith notes, Peirce had a “passion for finding things out, for seeing how they work and what they actually show themselves to be; he had little patience with anyone who had decided prior to experience that things *must* be this way or that. Peirce was a genuine empiricist.”<sup>498</sup>

Thus, none of the three counter-productive methods of belief formation can hold in the long run. They are, each of them, missing critical components central to Peirce’s philosophy: none is wholly fallible, none fully embraces experience as a central factor in belief formation, none has a truly objective gauge (beyond the individual, beyond the authority, or beyond our inclinations) by which to measure the efficacy of our beliefs, and none appreciates the central role that authentic dialogue plays in inquiry, both in terms of

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<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.* Peirce, too, relied heavily on “feeling,” the non-cognitive experience of “Firstness” or, in the language of “Fixation,” “prior belief.” It is a “having” of experience, rather than a “knowing,” and as such carries with it a connotation of infallibility. Feeling simply *is*. However, the judgment *about* that feeling takes place in Thirdness which Peirce admitted is, itself, fallible, and in this way he hoped to avoid the infinite regress Cooke alludes to here.

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>498</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 4. Peirce was a *type* of empiricist, to be sure, but his critique of Lockean empiricism (in his critique of the *a priori* philosophers) indicates he was a unique brand of empiricist.

problematizing our beliefs (the eternal need for a “gadfly” to our Euthyphro) and in terms of resolving those produced doubts communally. Only one method incorporates all of these facets of pragmatism: the scientific method of inquiry.



## Chapter 4

### The Scientific Method of Inquiry

“A Socratic mind such as Peirce’s, which delighted in putting every idea to the test and in following an argument irrespective of where it led, was bound to raise Eliot’s suspicions.”<sup>499</sup> Charles Eliot, the Harvard President who perennially denied Peirce the ability to participate in the vaunted academic milieu of Cambridge, was ever irritated by Peirce’s reticence to acquiesce to bureaucratic norms and regulations. There was always a hint of the “gadfly” in Peirce’s pragmatism: a “threat to the dominant ideologies,”<sup>500</sup> Peirce’s revolutionary philosophical insights sought to dismantle systematically the entrenched doctrines of the past, dissolve the instrumentalism encouraged by authority, and sting the tenacious belief-clinger into authentic (and autonomous) inquiry. As such, *dialogue* became a central facet in Peirce’s philosophical method: the active challenging, problematizing, and analyzing of beliefs.

Peirce’s first principle of reason follows from his observations about the nature of inquiry itself. As De Waal notes, “from the circumstance that inquiry has the vital powers of self-correction and growth, Peirce draws the conclusion that,”<sup>501</sup> in Peirce’s own words, “there is but one thing needful for learning the truth, and that is a hearty and

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<sup>499</sup> Joseph Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 108.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>501</sup> Cornelis de Waal, *On Peirce* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 94.

active desire to learn what is true.”<sup>502</sup> As Debrock notes, for Peirce, philosophy was intimately related “to a *passionate* pursuit” of the answers to “basic issues” that are not faced by an elite scientific community, but by “every man, woman, and child.”<sup>503</sup> Indeed, as Fitzgerald notes, Peirce’s method of inquiry, far from being an “abnormal veneration of science” or scientists, was meant to be “wide enough to include *all* kinds of procedures”<sup>504</sup> in all walks of life. As Brent notes, the “scientific” method of inquiry was just as applicable for Peirce to matters of religion, noting that Peirce “denied that any barrier should exist between religion and science in their nature as inquiries after truth.”<sup>505</sup> This was critical for Peirce and follows from everything we have thus far examined, reflecting his dedication to fallibilism and rejecting the inherent problems of all three counterproductive beliefs, from tenacity to authority to claims of apodictic certainty, all of which block the way for further inquiry by making chimerical claims to timeless certainty,<sup>506</sup> thereby negating (incorrectly) the need for further investigation. As Rockmore notes, “for Peirce, knowledge is the result of an ongoing process that has neither an absolute beginning nor an absolute end, that is always subject to rational criticism, whose results are hence always provisional.”<sup>507</sup> As De Waal notes,

Blocking the way of inquiry is, for Peirce, the worst sin one can commit in inquiry, as it obstructs the self-correctiveness of reasoning. Classical obstructions include the claim that certain facts can never be known, that

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<sup>502</sup> Charles S. Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, 8 Volumes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931–1936), CP 5.582. I will use the standard designation “CP” from here on.

<sup>503</sup> Guy Debrock, “Peirce, a Philosopher for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Part I: Introduction,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 28, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 1 – 18, 2.

<sup>504</sup> John J. Fitzgerald, “Peirce’s Theory of Inquiry,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 4, no. 3 (Fall 1968): 130–143, 132.

<sup>505</sup> Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 19.

<sup>506</sup> As Cooke notes, “his rejection of intuition includes a rejection of self-evident, indubitable, and certain judgments,” Elizabeth Cooke, *Peirce’s Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 8.

<sup>507</sup> Tom Rockmore, “Hegel, Peirce, and Knowledge,” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, New Series, 13, no. 1 (1999): 166–184, 174.

certain facts are ultimate (meaning that they cannot be explained in terms of anything else), and that certain facts have already attained their final and perfect formulation.<sup>508</sup>

Rather than being repulsed by doubt universally (though we are repulsed by specific, individual doubts), we should always be open to revise our beliefs since the irritation of doubt is the stimulus to inquiry and the genesis of all cognitive development. As De Waal notes, “inquiry always takes place against a backdrop of beliefs that are taken for granted.”<sup>509</sup> New beliefs, indeed, are only ever forged of the reassessment of previously held beliefs, a process stretching back over a lifetime of ongoing inquiry and cognitive development. Indeed, contra the method of tenacity that shuns problems at all cost, Peirce wished for us to embrace the possibility that we, as fallible inquirers, must, on occasion, revise our position. As Cooke notes,

Realizing that even the best methods produce knowledge which could be wrong, inquirers should remain open to error in their beliefs...by virtue of *recognizing* their own fallibility, inquirers also open the way to further inquiry. This is the specifically positive aspect of fallibilism, which entails a commitment to fallibilism in our beliefs because it is required for the growth of knowledge.<sup>510</sup>

In order to rectify the problems of the *a priori* method (up to this point, the best of the three counterproductive methods), “it is necessary that a method should be found by which our beliefs may be determined by nothing human, but by some external permanency – by something upon which our thinking has no effect.”<sup>511</sup> As Smith notes,

Since we all have the capacity to deceive ourselves as well as others, belief must have some overt and public signs attached to it; it must be subject to a test. It cannot exist only in the inner and private recesses of

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<sup>508</sup> De Waal, *On Pragmatism*, *Op. Cit.*, 94

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>510</sup> Cooke, *Peirce's Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, *Op. Cit.*, 28

<sup>511</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.384

consciousness; we need to have some public way of finding out whether we really do believe a given idea or doctrine.<sup>512</sup>

The method of tenacity relied on an individual's pre-established beliefs that were assumed *true*, unequivocally, come what may; the method of authority maintained that those in power dictated the gauge of belief efficacy but that this was easily reducible to whatever *they* deemed most conducive to the perpetuation of their hold on power; and the *a priori* method rested on assumed epistemological foundations that were agreeable to whim and fancy resulting in the monologue-infused-statement of some of the most time-honored philosophical deadlocks of all time where those with different foundations, unwilling to call into question the foundations themselves, continue to speak past one another on issues of greatest significance. As Brodsky notes:

[Peirce] argues that the scientific method is superior to its alternatives because in it the concept of reality is operative. It alone contains as a 'fundamental hypothesis' the belief that there are real things (5.384) and it alone has the prerogative of bringing about the coincidence of our beliefs and the facts (5.387).<sup>513</sup>

Brodsky hints at the type of correspondence theory that I've already suggested is a bit off the mark. Nevertheless, his fundamental point rings true: only the scientific method of inquiry assumes there are real facts-of-the-matter that are experienced by all who inquire into them, an external gauge beyond the tenacious clinging to beliefs, beyond what any authority may have to say about the matter, and beyond the whims of the *a priori* philosophers. As Peirce said:

Some mystics imagine that they have such a method in a private inspiration from on high. But that is only a form of the method of tenacity,

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<sup>512</sup> John Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 18.

<sup>513</sup> Garry M. Brodsky, "Peirce on Truth, Reality, and Inquiry," in "Pragmatism Reconsidered," special issue, *The Monist* 57, no. 2, (April 1973): 220–239, 220.

in which the conception of truth as something public is not yet developed. Our external permanency would not be external, in our sense, if it was restricted in its influence to one individual. It must be something which affects, or might affect, every man.<sup>514</sup>

We see shades of the fundamental recipe for the one and only productive method for fixing belief that Peirce will advocate: whatever else it may be, it must be “something public,” not “restricted in its influence to one individual,” and it must be something which affects, or could affect, “every man.” As such, it repudiates the fundamental principles of the method of tenacity, in particular, with its emphasis on individual isolationism, as well as harkens back to his critique of Descartes’ method wherein the meditator was capable of finding “Truth” in the isolation of his own bedchambers. Likewise, it hints at the disruption of the fundamental principle of the method of authority in its call for a necessarily “public” form of truth, strongly implying a demand for communal inquiry and debate within a public forum (what was clearly lacking in the method of authority). As Dewey notes:

The appeal in Peirce is essentially to the consensus of those who have investigated, using methods which are capable of employment by all. It is the need for social agreement, and the fact that in its absence ‘the method of tenacity’ will be exposed to disintegration from without, which finally forces upon mankind the wider and wider utilization of the scientific method.<sup>515</sup>

Consensus is, however, as I discussed previously, not the *terminus* of inquiry, but an integral factor in its *beginning*: we begin with the beliefs we have, beliefs best forged in communion with the beliefs held by most people, any one of which is corrigible, but not *all* of which are beyond *a priori* doubt. Further, it is a good metric by which to measure

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<sup>514</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.384.

<sup>515</sup> John Dewey, “The Pragmatism of Peirce,” *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 13, no. 26 (Dec. 1916): 709–715, 715.

the efficacy of any particular belief but is not, itself, generative of Truth: our beliefs are not the Truth simply because consensus has been reached but, conversely, consensus has been reached *because* we have a good indication that Truth, to a relative degree, has been attained. Consensus, then, is a *criterion* of Truth, but not equivalent with Truth itself.

Peirce, thus, suggested, “the method must be such that the ultimate conclusion of every man shall be the same. Such is the method of science.”<sup>516</sup> First, the object of inquiry must be something that affects every inquirer, that is, something public, communally accessible, and open to public debate and verification. Yet, what Peirce was advocating was not a sort of epistemic relativism, for he maintained that the ultimate conclusion of every inquirer, in the long run, “shall be the same.” Given enough time, debate, discourse, inquiry and communal investigation, the same conclusion about reality can be discovered by each individual inquirer in conjunction with the community at large. Indeed, as some commentators note, the hypothetical end of the “long run” is the culmination of both the epistemological quest for truth as it is the ideal unification of the community itself. As Mahowald notes, for example:

Absolute truth or fulness of reality is the gauge of the degree to which the community approaches unity, and in fact the continuing investigation presupposes the “hope, or calm and cheerful wish, that the community may last beyond any assignable date” (2.654). In other words, this community is the means to the perfect unity which is also a community of ideas and of inquirers. It is the means through which the ideal community is realized.<sup>517</sup>

Ernest Nagel once summarized Peirce’s method of inquiry as the surest way of establishing the requisite confidence in the results of science itself, noting:

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<sup>516</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.384.

<sup>517</sup> Mary B. Mahowald, “Peirce’s Concept of Community: Another Interpretation,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 9, no. 3 (Summer 1973): 175–186, 180.

It is characteristic of the best established sciences that though individuals may pursue researches in them independently of one another, the conclusions reached tend to support each other and to converge toward a common stream of sound beliefs; and such convergence is indeed the sole identifiable warrant for the confidence that some measure of the truth has been attained.<sup>518</sup>

From the method of tenacity, we learn that in barricading oneself off from one's fellows, one guards against problems, true, but in guarding against opposing beliefs that would problematize one's own and throw one into doubt, one likewise guards against cognitive progress. It would follow, then, that the scientific method of inquiry doesn't counsel us to *avoid* problems, rather, it would counsel us to *embrace* them. The method of authority, in order to answer the problems of the method of tenacity, is founded on the authoritarian dictation of beliefs to ensure that all individuals within a given polis maintain precisely the same beliefs, beliefs that swap their contingency with a false sense of essentialism and necessity and are to the benefit of the institution rather than an authentic seeking of the truth. Conversely, then, a productive method for fixing beliefs would encourage dialogue between individuals with opposing viewpoints (a speedy way to problematize a belief is to encounter an individual with a different belief than one's own, as Peirce noted in the undermining of the method of tenacity). Indeed, this method can even be of use of ending the stalemate that Peirce saw in the philosophical doctrines of rationalism and empiricism, the classical models both steeped in the *a priori* method. As he noted, addressing the other students of philosophy, like himself, who...

...deplore the present state of that study, and who are intent upon rescuing it therefrom and bringing it to a condition like that of the natural sciences, where investigators, instead of contemning each the work of most of the others as misdirected from beginning to end, cooperate, stand upon one

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<sup>518</sup> Ernest Nagel, "Charles S. Peirce, Pioneer of Modern Empiricism," *Philosophy of Science* 7, no. 1 (1940): 69 – 80, 69 – 70.

another's shoulders, and multiply incontestable results; where every observation is repeated, and isolated observations go for little; where every hypothesis that merits attention is subjected to severe but fair examination, and only after the predictions to which it leads have been remarkably borne out by experience is trusted at all, and even then only provisionally.<sup>519</sup>

We see here a fine example of the coordination of Peirce's various philosophical themes. He noted his call to fallibilism, that even after consensus forged of open-minded inquiry borne of initially discordant beliefs, our conclusions are, nevertheless, only ever "provisional." Further, the dialogical component is made clear here as individuals with opposing beliefs find themselves, by each adopting the same method of inquiry, eventually (and, for Peirce, inevitably) coming to cooperation and coordination of beliefs. Further, the scientific method of inquiry would be capable of exposing the false essentialism of the authority's imposed beliefs, demonstrating the act of the imposition itself for what it was, and encourage a free market of cognitive development unimpeded by threat of retaliation for voicing one's beliefs. Indeed, as Altshuler notes, "one need not appeal to facts about anything other than thoughts to mark off the true from the false, reality being defined as the object of those thoughts able to withstand (purportedly) intersubjective scrutiny by an unlimited community of investigations."<sup>520</sup>

Thus, the scientific method of inquiry is the pragmatic circuit of development as Peirce articulated it, allowed to develop freely, communally and openly in dialogue with other individuals of opposing beliefs. If, as Peirce maintained, the object of this inquiry is a true belief about the encountered environment, that object should be the same for all inquirers and, in the long run, should result in all individuals maintaining the same belief,

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<sup>519</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.413

<sup>520</sup> Bruce Altshuler, "Peirce's Theory of Truth and His Early Idealism," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1980): 118 – 140, 121.



not through ignorance, force or instinct, but as a the natural result of a communal inquiry, constantly checked and balanced by other inquirers, as he said, “all the followers of science are animated by a cheerful hope that the processes of investigation, if only pushed far enough, will give one certain solution to each question to which they apply it.”<sup>521</sup>

Peirce used the example of nine different scientists all using different methods to analyze the velocity of light:

They may at first obtain different results, but, as each perfects this method and his processes, the results are found to move steadily together toward a destined centre. So with all scientific research. Different minds may set out with the most antagonistic views, but the progress of investigation carries them by a force outside of themselves to one and the same conclusion. This activity of thought by which we are carried, not where we wish, but to a fore-ordained goal, is like the operation of destiny. No modification of the point of view taken, no selection of other facts for study, no natural bent of mind even, can enable a man to escape the predestinate opinion. This great hope is embodied in the conception of truth and reality. The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. That is the way I would explain reality.<sup>522</sup>

We may visualize the transactions between these scientists with, initially, “antagonistic” views, all coming to invariably reach the same conclusion which incorporates this social aspect into Peirce’s original formulation of belief formation as we’ve discussed.

It’s important to note that Peirce was not advocating an elite class of scientists, as I’ve said, and limiting the community to such a small pool. As H.H. Liebhaufsky notes:

The reader should not make the mistake, as some writers have, of thinking that Peirce called for the replacement of Plato’s philosopher-kings by ‘scientist-kings.’ Careful reading...clearly discloses that he assigned the role of ‘fixation of belief’ to scientific *method*, not to scientists or to an

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<sup>521</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.407.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*

elite scientific community. The method is *impersonal* and *objective* and involves the experimental verification of predictions contained in theories.<sup>523</sup>

This “unlimited community constituted the environment within which unlimited intellectual activity could occur.”<sup>524</sup> The individual scientists are not the measure of the success of the method but it is the method, itself, as self-correcting and informed by fallibilism and the first rule of reason that guards against the monopolization of Truth by any individual or specific social group for, as Talisse notes, Peirce “denies that proper...deliberation could be exercised by a small group of experts.”<sup>525</sup> DeMarco notes of some Peirce scholars that “they seem to assume that for Peirce the community is a group of individuals dedicated to scientific pursuits...that this is not what Peirce means should be apparent from the denial of the positive status of individuality that is pervasive throughout his writings.”<sup>526</sup>

What Peirce claimed here is that, to provide a practical example, if all nine scientists begin with the same goal for inquiry and nine different beliefs about that goal, invariably their opinions will be drawn closer and closer together as their beliefs continue to challenge one another, instigating inquiry after inquiry with new, better, more dynamic beliefs, until at least a consensus is achieved.<sup>527</sup> Key here, too, was the movement in Peirce from chaos towards order: from the disparate beliefs of a wide variety of different perspectives, eventually, through this process of inquiry available to all who participate in

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<sup>523</sup> H. H. Liebhafsky, “Peirce on the Summum Bonum and the Unlimited Community: Ayres on ‘The Criterion of Value,’” *Journal of Economic Issues* 20, no. 1 (Mar. 1986): 5 – 20, 9.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>525</sup> Robert Talisse, “Towards a Peircean Politics of Inquiry,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 40, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 21 – 38, 28.

<sup>526</sup> Joseph DeMarco, “Peirce’s Concept of Community: Its Development & Change,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 4, no. 7 (Winter 1971): 24 – 36, 24.

<sup>527</sup> As DeMarco notes, “In Peirce’s early thought, the community functions as an epistemological ideal: the community of agreement defines truth and reality and is the culmination of the thought process,” *Ibid.*, 25.

it, a community is formed and a more unified belief is accepted universally. As DeMarco notes, it generates “unity from disunity” and “at the same time, the ideal starting point indicates that the direction of thought is toward unity.”<sup>528</sup> This movement towards unity that DeMarco discusses here is the increasing consensus found in the beliefs of a community of inquirers if they engage in the method of inquiry over the long run. Initially antagonistic parties with divergent beliefs will submit their findings to their fellow inquirers, pitting their beliefs against the beliefs of others, as problem after problem with one or many or all of the initial beliefs of the community are unearthed and overcome, resulting ideally in an accepted belief for all members of the inquiring party, the achieved objective which *is*, ultimately, the object of knowledge. Again it is important to note that consensus does not determine Truth (for consensus may be found in the method of authority as readily as it’s found in the method of inquiry), but consensus, if achieved via Peirce’s recommended method, is a good indication that Truth, to a relative degree, has been achieved (though ever revisable in an open-ended future).

This point may be further clarified by Royce and Kernan who note that as “knowledge grows toward perfection, the discrepancy between theory and fact grows less. That is simply because the better we know nature, the more we can discover how to adjust theory and fact, one to the other.”<sup>529</sup> It is important to note, however, that the adjustment of “theory” and “fact” is *not* a correspondence between “belief” and “reality.” Reality, as I’ve discussed, is *constructed* in Thirdness as a coordination of beliefs and the environment with which the inquirer is transacting. But that Reality of Thirdness cannot

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<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.* Further, DeMarco notes that “the syllogistic process brings partially unified data to completion in the unity of the community of agreement by an ever increasing process,” *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>529</sup> Josiah Royce and Fergus Kernan, “Charles Sanders Peirce,” *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 13, no. 26 (Dec. 1916): 701 – 709, 704.

be just anything we *want* it to be, for the external permanency we experience is the way it is regardless “of what you or I or any finite number of men may think about it; and that, on the other hand, though the object of the final opinion depends on what that opinion is, yet what that opinion is does not depend on what you or I or any man thinks.”<sup>530</sup> If a community of individuals creates the consensus that “fire will not burn flesh” that consensus will not stop the brute facticity that fire will, indeed, burn flesh. Reality, the object of the final opinion, does, indeed, depend on the opinion (it is constructed) but that opinion does not depend upon what any finite number of inquirers may say about it (it is, what it is, regardless of our beliefs). Reality, as I’ve argued previously, is constructed through a coordination of our beliefs *and* an external permanency upon which our thought has no effect. This harkens back to Peirce’s demand for some standard beyond the tenacious beliefs of the individual, beyond the authoritarian ideologies of the institution, and beyond the intuitions of the philosophers. As Smith notes,

Insofar as he took science to be a standard critical procedure to for fixing belief, Peirce wanted to go beyond the habits or behavior of any one individual. His theory of science as a self-correcting way of arriving at beliefs goes beyond individual psychology; it points instead to a community of investigators committed to a method of arriving at critical conclusions.<sup>531</sup>

Peirce was attracted to the notion of the community of inquiry, “for both it provided a means of taking individual beliefs into account at the same time that such belief is subjected to a critical standard.”<sup>532</sup> Thus, “all claims to truth and knowledge must have a public character.”<sup>533</sup> As Eco notes, this “process of verification” is “based on slow,

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<sup>530</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.408.

<sup>531</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 22.

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*

collective, public performance by what Charles Sanders Peirce called ‘the Community.’ It is thanks to human faith in the work of this community”<sup>534</sup> that genuine progress can be achieved. This “public character” and “critical standard” has two components, separate but intimately related. On the one hand, the standard *is* the method of inquiry itself: as the most productive of the four methods for fixing beliefs, individual beliefs can be in part communally tested, explored and verified as to what degree the investigator adhered to the best possible method for attaining that belief. The investigator’s development of thought, from previously held beliefs, to an encountered problem, to the doubt that instigated a specific form of inquiry leading to a definitive resolution that established the new belief in question, can be traced clearly and methodically. Indeed, as DeMarco notes “the commonality of the community is cognitive, having nothing essential to do with physical location, occupation, or practical concerns.”<sup>535</sup> On the other hand, what is likewise public, accessible to all, and used as a critical standard, is the belief that is already held by the majority.<sup>536</sup> This belief, an achieved objective of countless previous inquiries from countless previous investigators all culminating in the accepted belief of that entire inquiring community, *is*, effectively, Reality as we’ve defined it. As Nagel notes, Peirce’s theory of inquiry “makes evident the continuity of knowledge-getting with other organic activities.”<sup>537</sup>

It involves the conception of inquiry as occurring in a definite context, instituted to settle specific doubts and problems, and terminating in an equally definite way with the establishment of smoothly-working habits of action which have mastered the difficulties for which the inquiry was

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<sup>534</sup> Umberto Eco, *Serendipities* (New York: Mariner Books, 1999), 19.

<sup>535</sup> DeMarco, “Peirce’s Concept of Community: Its Development & Change,” *Op. Cit.*, 25.

<sup>536</sup> It is important to note that this belief, the one held by the majority of the community (i.e., the consensus) is not the terminus of inquiry but its beginning. Perhaps similar to Aristotle’s insistence that we begin our inquiries with what *endoxa* we find in our communities so as to address *why* that belief is held by so many whether or not our current inquiries lead to the same conclusion.

<sup>537</sup> Nagel, “Charles S. Peirce, Pioneer of Modern Empiricism,” *Op. Cit.*, 75.

initiated. Knowledge thus becomes identifiable as the product of overt behavior involving cooperative effort in a community of inquirers, rather than as the outcome of a purely subcutaneous mental activity. So conceived, knowledge is in fact frequently obtained, for the claim to possess it does not involve the preposterous requirement that the outcome of one inquiry be incorrigible by further inquiry, or that unless it carries the traits of absolute finality and all-inclusiveness the product of research is not knowledge.<sup>538</sup>

Thus, both the method itself and objective reality (objective in the sense that it's the achieved "objective" of inquiry of a community of investigators complete with the externality of Secondness encountered by all who inquire) act as standards of communal measurement for the belief of this new inquiry. Of course, they are intimately related, these two public standards, as the latter was forged of countless instances of the former. Yet, the objective of communal inquiry, in the long run, results in an opinion "which would finally result from investigation" that "does not depend on how anybody may actually think."<sup>539</sup> Peirce noted that even if the human race should cease altogether, and some alien race descended to earth and picked up a line of inquiry where humans left off, the conclusion of that inquiry would remain the same.<sup>540</sup>

In sum, Peirce's method of inquiry reflected all of the central facets of his pragmatism: the true beliefs it generates are provisional (fallibilism); its adherence to the first rule of reason highlights the stultifying effects of the other three methods by championing open-mindedness and wonder; and the fusion of beliefs forged communally through transactions with an externally existent reality reflect his unique fusion of

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<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*, 75 – 76.

<sup>539</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.408

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*

rational and empirical strains as well as his qualified realism and phenomenological idealism<sup>541</sup> complete with his insistence on dialogue and social individualism.

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<sup>541</sup> Indicative of his articulation of “Thirdness,” as I’ve discussed.

## Chapter 5

### The Socio-Political Implications of Peirce's Pragmatism

Despite Peirce's insistence that philosophy never be subjugated to socio-political concerns, this adamant stance was clearly forged of a distrust and a distaste for the bureaucratic and capitalistic ingression of values into what ought to otherwise be a free, unfolding of radical inquiry. Even submission to the most liberal and benevolent values is still *submission* to values, values not of one's own making, and thus remains a form of instrumentalism that Peirce ardently opposed. Nevertheless, by juxtaposing the community of inquirers in his ideal method of inquiry with the "community" at the mercy of an authoritarian power, Peirce implicitly began to construct a socio-political vision of an ideal environment wherein inquiring organisms may flourish. As Talisse notes, "Peirce's insights regarding inquiry, truth, and community may contribute to current debates about deliberative democracy."<sup>542</sup> As I'll demonstrate, Peirce did not *prescribe* values: he merely *describes* how inquiry (any inquiry, *all* inquiry) actually happens in its quest for Truth. And if Truth is a goal in itself, and a means to no higher goal (as Peirce proclaimed), then taking on the *method* of inquiry (not specific values forged *a priori*) does not violate his first rule of reason but, in fact, is demanding *by* it.

It seems ambiguous, at first, precisely what sort of individualism Peirce championed. On the one hand, within the method of authority, Peirce championed those

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<sup>542</sup> Robert Talisse, "Towards a Peircean Politics of Inquiry," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 40, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 21 – 38, 21.



individuals of “wider social feeling” that were capable of ruggedly (atomically) transcending the indoctrinating milieu by *distancing* themselves from their fellows. On the other hand, within the ideal community of inquirers, dialogue, solidarity and a distinct form of *social* individualism seems prevalent. If we merge our interests with those of our fellows, the productivity of such a move is relative to the socio-political situation that the individual finds him or herself *in*. This was, after all, how Peirce defined the Gospel of Christ as opposed to the Gospel of Greed which was clearly an attack on the rugged, atomic individualism of a Horatio Alger American ideal of capital. We *ought* to merge our endeavors with our neighbors rather than trampling all over them on our way to the top of the capitalistic mountain. *However*, in the method of authority, this merging of one’s interests with one’s neighbor actually *perpetuates* the indoctrination proliferated by the authority, itself, and thus within the method of *authority*, at least, Peirce *does* advocate a kind of radical individualism, those with a “wider sort of social feeling,” that not only actively defy the interests of the authority (which have become the interests of their neighbors) but, too, become a sort of “gadfly” to reinvigorate inquiry on a social scale.

However, with the exception of this specific case (championing rugged individualism to break free from the method of authority), Peirce was unequivocally (even hyperbolically) a champion of social individualism. This is ubiquitously apparent in his critique of the Gospel of Greed (and, conversely, his championing of the Gospel of Christ); his critique of Cartesian solipsism and introspection that a man alone can find Truth (and, conversely, his insistence that only working together, in concert, can Truth be approximated); and his critique of each of the three counterproductive methods of belief

formation (in the method of tenacity there is individual self-isolation, the method of authority sees individuals streamlined into automatons where no authentic dialogue is possible, and even the *a priori* method, resting safe on unanalyzed premises borne of what statements appear agreeable to reason, fail to engage in authentic dialogue).

Further, our use of signs and language condition our engagement of the world (and the “world” includes other inquiring selves). For Peirce, all thoughts are expressed as thought-signs, interconnected, none isolated, and all informed in some way by our interactions with our social and natural environments. As Nagel notes,

Pragmatism does not supply a formula which states once and for all what *the* meaning of a statement is; for when its maxim is taken seriously, it excludes the assumption that the meaning of a sentence can be determined in isolation from the system of sentences in which it occurs, the rules governing its acceptance, and the kind of behavior associated with it.<sup>543</sup>

This summation by Nagel highlights Peirce’s fallibilism with the claim that pragmatism does not find any sort of ultimate, timeless meaning, but views the inherent revisability in the ongoing use and changing structures of the language of signs that gives rise to the meaning of statements in the first place.

Transactions with the world (including other selves) constitute an ongoing, unfolding process without terminal end. As such, as we’ve seen, there is a *practical* as well as theoretical component to knowledge: we are beings of the world and *in* the world and these transactions forge the experiences that, in turn, forge our understanding. Beliefs forged of these processes are likewise “rules of action” as Peirce might call them, as we’ve seen, the very purpose of thought has a practical dimension (though, as we’ve seen, it would be a mistake to conclude that Peirce was a reductionist in this sense as

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<sup>543</sup> Ernest Nagel, “Charles S. Peirce, Pioneer of Modern Empiricism,” *Philosophy of Science* 7, no. 1 (1940): 69 – 80, 74.

beliefs are not reducible to actions and nor is “the only essential result of successful inquiry...successful action,”<sup>544</sup> as Russell incorrectly charged). As Hickman notes:

Both Peirce and Dewey in fact located their own positions well outside of this cognitivist-praxicalist struggle, arguing that the positions of both camps are defective because they are incomplete. Peirce and Dewey did this by subordinating both theory and practice (cognition and action, thinking and doing), to production or making; to what the Greeks had called *poietike*. It is not that they ignored either cognition or praxis, for they did not: it is just that neither Peirce nor Dewey thought cognition or praxis to be the end of inquiry.<sup>545</sup>

Indeed, as Peirce noted,

The pragmaticist does not make the *summum bonum* to consist in action, but makes it to consist in that process of evolution whereby the existent comes more and more to embody those generals which were just now said to be *destined*, which is what we strive to express in calling them *reasonable*.<sup>546</sup>

According to Peirce’s long run theory, as we’ve seen, the idealized belief was that which the unlimited community of inquirers is “destined” to achieve at the end of this hypothetical long run of inquiry’s unfolding over time if the prescribed method is persistently engaged. Thus, though beliefs culminate in actions, those actions are not at all divorced from thought; actions resulting from more and more dynamic beliefs are only

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<sup>544</sup> Bertrand Russell, *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969), 304.

<sup>545</sup> Larry Hickman, *Pragmatism as Post-Postmodernism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 243 – 244. For Peirce, theory (perhaps encapsulated by the abductive component of inquiry, the hypothetical postulation of potential outcomes of experiments not yet engaged) and practice (the act of inquiry itself) formed a mutually complementary theory “productive,” in Hickman’s words, of true beliefs (ideally) leading to Truth at the end of the long run. However, the end of inquiry (hypothetical as it may be) is certainly cognitive in a sense as it is the attainment of Truth. I believe what Hickman is driving at here is that it is no mere “grasping” of Truth, indicative of a spectator theory of knowledge that Peirce abhorred, but more an unproblematic unification, of sorts, between organism (inquirer) and environment, one neither wholly praxis nor wholly cognitive, neither wholly theory nor wholly practice, but like the three categories of phenomenological experience themselves (Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness), a fusion of both.

<sup>546</sup> Charles S. Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, 8 Volumes (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931 – 1936), CP 5.433. I will use the standard designation “CP” from here on.

and ever forged of successful experiment and inquiry as “act” and “thought” evolve in the organisms in concert.

So ingrained is the human individual within his/her nested natural and social environments that a complete separation was impossible, for Peirce. There is unique haecceity, of this there is no doubt, but individuation is borne of Peirce’s more primal, more fundamental conception of the whole from which we break *free* and seek to return (rather than the traditional, “additive” view that “society” is the sum-total of the atomic parts that comprise it). This parallels Peirce’s triadic categories, especially those represented in his phenomenology (phaneroscopy): as Firstness represents an immediacy of experience, an unproblematic background *gestalt* of experience prior to any individuation wherein mind and world, self and other, are not yet divided, named, and compartmentalized, there are no absolute “individuals” on this most primal level of immediacy, there is only the whole, a kind of ultimate organism, as Peirce will call it, wherein we individual cells have no yet distinguished ourselves. Secondness, the experience of externality, of resistance and tension, demarcates “self” from “other” with the onset of some form of problematic situation, nominal as the problem may be, enough to distinguish the “I” from the “that” or the “you.” It is in Secondness, to follow this analogy, that individuation first emerges, not Firstness. Thirdness, then, the cognitive rationalizing and categorizing of experience into a systemic unity is how we then engage our individuality, what we make of it, and how we then re-engage the world of environment and Other exposed and expressed in Secondness. As I discussed above, the “how” of our re-engagement with Other and environment will be determined in no small part by the method of belief formation we engage in. Are we, as unique individuals,

encouraged to re-unite or diverge further? The individual operating with the method of tenacity is barely more than a hermit. The individual within the milieu of authority is “re-united,” to be sure, but an enforced and indoctrinated heteronymous manner by the authority itself, culminating in a kind of “mass mentality,” and the individuals operating under the *a priori* method find themselves aligning with foundational theories in one camp or another divorced from authentic dialogue with individuals ensconced in some opposing philosophical-qua-ideological camp. Only the method of inquiry, as Peirce described it, encouraged authentic dialogue with the goal to seek Truth and forge consensus, re-uniting the scatters fragments of this primal unity without forcing or coercing individuals to come together.

As Mullin notes, “Peirce asserted that the individual self, apart from other selves is an illusion.”<sup>547</sup> Implicitly, Peirce rejected the conception of the self as “atomic”<sup>548</sup> or “rugged,” advocating, instead, a “social individualism” that he felt better reflected the reality of his semiotic conception of cognition as well as the necessarily communal aspect of inquiry.

The genesis of the conception of the self as “atomic,” isolated and self-sustaining may well be traced back to the rise of modern conceptions of democracy and modern forms of capitalism. As Mullin observes,

Political democracy and the system of capitalism and private ownership developed on the assumption that the individual first subsists, and then enters into arrangements with other individuals for their mutual benefit. The preeminence that each of us bestows on our separate selves bolsters

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<sup>547</sup> Richard Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 127.

<sup>548</sup> Michael notes that, “in terms of the concept of an atomic individual... Peirce consistently denies exists” except in the most confused and contrived manner, always derivative off the primacy of a social collective. Emily Michael, “Peirce on Individuals,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 12, no. 4 (Fall 1976): 321 – 329, 321.

the belief in the reality of separate individuals. Each of us seems to be self-contained and self-centered, and our cooperation and communication take place among ready-made selves.<sup>549</sup>

Thus, for Peirce to claim that the separate self is nothing more than an illusion in light of its preeminence throughout western political democracies and systems of capitalism, he must both convince his readers of the alternative while simultaneously accounting for the prevalence and popularity of the illusion itself:

A person is not absolutely an individual. His thoughts are what he is 'saying to himself,' that is, is saying to that other self that is just coming into life in the flow of time. When one reasons, it is that critical self that one is trying to persuade; and all thought whatsoever is a sign, and is mostly of the nature of language. The second thing to remember is that the man's circle of society (however widely or narrowly this phrase may be understood), is a sort of loosely compacted person, in some respects of higher rank than the person of an individual organism.<sup>550</sup>

A person is not "absolutely an individual," that is, for Peirce, a person is not atomically isolated from the rest of his or her society. We note that the conception of "dialogue," so fundamental to Peirce's method of inquiry, runs deep; even an individual in conversation with him or herself is in some internal manifestation of dialogue which necessarily is thought in signs and language which, in turn, is forged of communal engagement to grant those signs and language meaning and purpose (the notion of a private language is chimerical, for Peirce).

Indeed, Peirce saw the entirety of a society ("however widely" one wants to understand this, that is, to include even all of humanity if one wishes) as a whole

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<sup>549</sup> Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 127.

<sup>550</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.421.

organism<sup>551</sup> of which the individual is but one aspect or cell, defined only in coordination with the whole, though nevertheless unique and distinct.<sup>552</sup>

Consider Peirce's exploration of the gospel of Christ as it reflects, in no small part, his position on social individualism in general:

Here, then, is the issue. The gospel of Christ says that progress comes from every individual merging his individuality in sympathy with his neighbours. On the other side, the conviction of the nineteenth century is that progress takes place by virtue of every individual's striving for himself with all his might and trampling his neighbour under foot whenever he gets a chance to do so. This may accurately be called the Gospel of Greed.<sup>553</sup>

For Peirce, the gospel reflected an inherent quality of love, not for oneself, but for others, and that it taught "that growth comes only from love, from – I will not say self-*sacrifice*, but from the ardent impulse to fulfill another's highest impulse."<sup>554</sup> It is this unitary vision of a humanity in which individuals achieve their highest impulses not through the "Gospel of Greed," but in helping others achieve their own and, in turn, receiving the aid of others in the achieving of one's own ends. Further, as Anderson suggests, Peirce's

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<sup>551</sup> Altshuler, however, notes the following: "while there is a clear sense in which Peirce's view of truth is anti-individualistic, it does *not* seem essentially to depend on a community of different individuals. For if we define truth as the limit of opinions resulting from repeated applications of the scientific method of 'fixing beliefs,' there does not seem to be any theoretical reason for preferring a community of distinct people to a single individual with an infinite lifespan and resources," even citing a few passages from an 1871 article in which Peirce seems to "admit that this distinction between individual and community is not crucial for his theory" on these grounds. I would argue against such a reading of Peirce, however, noting that humans are *not*, in fact, immortal with limitless resources and, as a good scientifically-minded individual, this is clearly not what Peirce had in mind, even if it does logically follow in some sense. Further, this reading eschews the significance of his conception of the community as a kind of "mega-organism," wherein the individual plays an integral, social role as a cell that makes up a larger body. That community therefore *is*, in a sense, Altshuler's immortal with limitless resources, without the need to even consider an *actual* individual possessing of both. Bruce Altshuler, "Peirce's Theory of Truth and His Early Idealism," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1980): 118 – 140, 121.

<sup>552</sup> As DeMarco notes: "A person originally was the locus of the thought process. As such, a person participates in, and derives his reality from the community of agreement. The community thus becomes the essential person," Joseph DeMarco, "Peirce's Concept of Community: Its Development & Change," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 4, no. 7 (Winter 1971): 24 – 36, 28.

<sup>553</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.294.

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 6.289.

critique of the “Gospel of Greed” seems to demonstrate that Peirce “was not an advocate of what seem to many to be the worst demons of American capitalism,”<sup>555</sup> which will be of great significance in our attempt to bring Peirce into conversation with German critical theory in the chapters to follow.

As I discussed earlier, contrary to Descartes’ insistence on universal doubt as a starting point for inquiry, Peirce maintained that we must begin with the beliefs we have at the start. These beliefs (most of which are likely true but any *one* of which may be false based on Peirce’s fallibilism) have been forged from a wide array of sources: culture and community, textbooks and experts, individual inquiry, dialogue, indoctrination, and so forth. Thus, there is at every moment a continua between *my* beliefs<sup>556</sup> and yours, your beliefs with those around you, and so on, extending out in an ever-changing, infinitely intricate web of thought-signs without definite beginning and without definite end. As Mullin notes, “Peirce, by contrast, held that no idea stands isolated from others. Each idea is signified by some things and in turn signifies others.”<sup>557</sup>

The self must be no more than an illusion of isolation. Thoughts connected with other thoughts which in turn are informed by the external environment in terms of signs, communally constructed and conveyed through socially constructed language, all within a massive continuum in which mind and body, self and others, exist by varying in degree of reality rather than kind. As Mullin notes:

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<sup>555</sup> Douglas R. Anderson, “A Political Dimension of Fixing Belief,” in *The Rule of Reason: The Philosophy Charles S. Peirce*, edited by Jacqueline Brunning and Paul Forster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 223.

<sup>556</sup> One can certainly read Descartes’ method as dialogical in the sense that the meditator was having a dialogue with himself, an inner dialogue, if you will, with his own beliefs. Interesting to note, Peirce had a similar conception of “inner dialogue,” noting, for example: “thinking always proceeds in the form of a dialogue -- a dialogue between different phases of the *ego*,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 4.6. Thus, by Peirce’s own admission of the reality of an internal form of dialogue (within a single subject, as it were), his critique of Descartes’ method as too solipsistic may be a bit unfair.

<sup>557</sup> Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 128.



The embodied human self exists in communion with other selves, and only in illusion does the self exist separately from other embodied selves. According to this view, I do not completely constitute myself; my neighbor, to some extent, *is* myself, and I *am* my neighbor's self.<sup>558</sup>

If our characters are in no small part provisionally determined by the sum total of our beliefs and if those beliefs are communally formulated to the point where our very cognition is ever through thought-signs which are, in turn, influenced by the language and use of the community, in no small part are we influenced by the beliefs of our immediate social environment. In a very real sense, an individual's participation within a community determines the conception of "self" for that individual as well as for all others within that community of inquirers, and vice versa. Indeed, rather than atomic individuals entering into a community additively, Peirce took the opposite stance: our conception of self is determined by subtracting ourselves as individuated from a more fundamental conception of the community itself. As Mullin notes,

According to Peirce's theory, each of us consists of a cell in a social organism. Before any other characteristic, our particular array of faults and limitations distinguishes us, as individuals, from the social organism ... common childhood experience reminds us that we most easily call attention to ourselves by being out of step with social expectations.<sup>559</sup>

Individuation does not take place prior to the construct of the community, the inverse of the standard conception of individuality in which individuals are prior. Our very thoughts, for Peirce, are, after all, sign-thoughts given meaning through use and language constructed not by ourselves in isolation but through our participation in the greater community. We draw attention to ourselves by being "out of step" with that community through fault, error or general limitation, thereby defining individualism only secondarily

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<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*

through subtracted one particular cell of a great social organism from the whole of that organism. Nor is error the sole constituent of individuality, merely as aspect of it. As Muoio notes, “Peirce states that man’s separate existence is *manifested* by ignorance and error, not that it *consists* of them.”<sup>560</sup>

The self is *distinct* from others but does not exist separately from them...we *discover* ourselves through our own ignorance and error, but ignorance and error do not *constitute* the self. We err if we think of the self as a separate entity, but not if we think that the self is distinct. An aspect of the self stands out as unique.<sup>561</sup>

We distinguish ourselves from the community through error or by being somehow “out of step.” However, that does not mean that there is not something, some “self,” that is unique and irreducible to the whole. As Mullin notes, “we derive self-consciousness from interacting with other minds.”<sup>562</sup> In stark contrast to a solipsistic conception of the self, for Peirce, consciousness of one’s own self requires the recognition of an “other,” in a move that he no doubt acquired from his understanding of Hegel. Mullin gives us a practical example of how this discovery of self-consciousness unfolds:

The child perceives itself as being distinct from others by being aware of the differences in perception between itself and other people. This mostly occurs as a result of errors on the part of the child. For example, if parents tell the child that the stove is hot, he might not believe it until he learns from a painful experience. Then he discovers the error of his own judgment and the truth in the words that that adults expressed. The child therefore discovers itself through communication with others.<sup>563</sup>

Colapietro confirms this aspect of Peirce’s conception of the self in saying, “the self is truly something unique and irreducible in itself, but what it is in itself is only revealed or,

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<sup>560</sup> Patricia A. Muoio, “Peirce on the Person,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 20, no. 2 (Spring 1984): 169 – 181, 173 – 174.

<sup>561</sup> Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy, Op. Cit.*, 129.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*, 129s.

more accurately, realized through its relation to others.”<sup>564</sup> Although there is an aspect of the self that is unique, and necessarily so, for Peirce this did not constitute the “essence” of the self lest we succumb to the “illusion” of atomic individualism. Although there is something unique about each individual self, more fundamental is its engagement with, and relation to, others.

When we consider Peirce’s pragmatic circuit of inquiry, it becomes increasingly clear how this individuation takes place. If we are, to a great degree, the total of our beliefs and if those beliefs are conditioned by encountered problems, ensuing doubts, and subsequent inquiries, it follows that, since no two individuals encounter the exact same problems in the exact same way, don’t experience the same doubt, and don’t engage in precisely the same inquiry, the cyclical unfolding of our beliefs are processes unique to every individual. Nevertheless, every aspect of that process, from our beliefs through our inquiries, are conditioned by the community prior to our individuation: our social environments influence what problems we face, what beliefs we have, what we have at our disposal to inquire, to the very thoughts we have and express through signs conditioned by language and use. As DeMarco notes:

The structure of the early community begins to become clear. The community is linked to reality because it provides unity to the manifold through agreed upon general information. Peirce is claiming that reality is the idealistic unity of the signs that are manipulated in thought. Since unified cognitions are the only reality, his...thought is a brand of cognitionism.<sup>565</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> Vincent Colapietro, *Peirce’s Approach to the Self: A Semiotic Approach to Human Subjectivity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 74.

<sup>565</sup> DeMarco, “Peirce’s Concept of Community: Its Development & Change,” *Op. Cit.*, p. 26. If “Reality” is the sum-total of unified cognitions (“Thirdness,” in this sense), and the method of inquiry was meant to unify disparate beliefs (both within a single inquirer and between different inquirers resulting in total consensus) consistent with his holism, it may be said that Peirce subscribed to this unique form of cognitionism, as DeMarco claims. If Truth, for Peirce, is unassailable by doubt, and inquiry is meant to slowly, proddingly, but surely improve our beliefs over the long run, then this cognitionism would appear

This unification of sign-thoughts complements Peirce's conception of the individual, as we've seen, as a sort of "subtraction" from the whole and the subsequent relationship to that whole from which it is subtracted. As DeMarco notes:

Where does Peirce locate the significative thought process? Peirce answers that it is located in the minds of men. But how does Peirce define man? He distinguishes two aspects of man's nature; one is essential and the other is negative: man is both essentially communal and negatively individual. Accordingly, Peirce attempts to show that man is identified, by nature, with the thought process as it moves to increasingly unified information. When men are in agreement, they derive their communal nature from the reality of the agreement.<sup>566</sup>

Further, this relationship between the ideal community and the individual reflects Peirce's quest to discover the pure, rational inquirer freed from his or her individual biases and idiosyncracies<sup>567</sup>:

The chaotic impressions belonging to the private man are unified in agreement through the necessary operation of thought. Insofar as impressions are private and part of the chaos to be unified, man is a limitation on the final, communal reality of Peirce's...cognitionism. And as a participant in the community...man finds his positive nature. Thus man's concept of himself as an individual is an illusion.<sup>568</sup>

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to have a hint of Peirce's evolutionary theory of belief formation, with doubt serving as the impetus for growth and development and the catalyst for the evolution of beliefs.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>567</sup> As DeMarco notes: "Peirce locates man's positive essence in what he calls the transcendental unity of pure apperception, that is, the community of agreement. Identification with the transcendental unity of pure apperception can be reached only when man is able to transcend his own idiosyncrasies and his personal interests; this is accomplished by using the process of induction and hypothesis," *Ibid.* As Peirce himself notes, "Pure apperception is the self-assertion of THE *ego*; the self-consciousness here meant is the recognition of my *private* self. I know that *I* (not merely *the* I) exist," Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.225 and, further, that "ignorance and error are all that distinguish our private selves from the absolute *ego* of pure apperception," CP 5.235.

<sup>568</sup> DeMarco, "Peirce's Concept of Community: Its Development & Change," *Op. Cit.*, p. 26.

As Peirce noted, “ideas tend to spread continuously and to affect certain others which stand to them in a peculiar relation of affectability.”<sup>569</sup> The more we develop through engaging in inquiry the more our ideas spread to those other within that community of inquirers as their ideas, in turn, spread to infect of our own. As Mullin notes, “this law explains the development of personality. For example, “as we develop from childhood toward adulthood, our various and sometimes conflicting feelings, thoughts and desires become more integrated to form a sense of personal identity.”<sup>570</sup>

As we discussed in our analysis of Peirce’s positive theory of inquiry, feelings, thoughts and desires in conflict are tested and resolved successfully only in relation to the feelings, thoughts and desires of others. As Mullin says, “the self remains always in dialogue...thinking involves dialogue.”<sup>571</sup> Thus, “the self cannot be understood as an entity apart from other selves and apart from its future and the future of other selves.”<sup>572</sup> All this serves to reinforce Peirce’s maintenance of synechism that admits of no strict and unbridgeable gap between oneself and others. Quite the opposite, in fact, we see here that Peirce’s conception of self was necessarily bound up with other selves, a more primary “social self” which is individuated only secondarily. In essence, then, the self is, itself, a sign<sup>573</sup>: never in isolation but only and always necessarily in communion with not only other selves but, too, the world beyond.

Thus, we gain a clear understanding of Peirce’s social psychology, a pragmatic theory of belief formation and character development as an integrally social self, influenced in no small part by its transactions with its nested social and natural

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<sup>569</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.104.

<sup>570</sup> Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 129.

<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.*, *Op. Cit.*, 129 – 130.

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.*, *Op. Cit.*, 130.

<sup>573</sup> “The self is essentially a sign,” *Ibid.*

environments. It follows that socio-political influences are integral to the development of the individual, through language and the use of signs, through engaging in the necessarily dialogical component of Peirce's method of inquiry, this will invariably influence how the individual self-identifies and how the individual's formation of beliefs is played out by supplying the conditions for problems to emerge and the tools which the individual may or may not have at his or her disposal to bring to bear upon the resolution of those problems.

However, this brings us back to the dilemma at the heart of the faux "solidarity" in the method of authority, akin to a kind of Sartrean "seriality" as opposed to an authentic "group in fusion" found in an ideal community of inquirers in a truly democratic socio-political milieu. I explored briefly one of the reasons why Peirce did not (indeed, could not) maintain a correspondence theory of Truth was precisely because the idea of Reality was far more "occult," in his words, and "wider" in Feibleman's words, than Truth precisely because it included "falsity" itself. Falsity is *real* and every bit *as* real as Truth. Eco, one of the greatest Peircean semeioticians, made a close study of this "Force of Falsity" in *Serendipities*. By advocating that we expose ourselves to our cultural milieu, to merge our interests with our neighbors, we run the risk of exposing ourselves to the virus of falsity proliferated by the authority. Eco relates the story of Frederick the Great and the infamous "Letter of Prester John," a falsehood, Eco notes, that undeniably "changed world history."<sup>574</sup>

Eco begins his account of the force of falsity in the unfolding of human history by conjuring Aquinas' question as to which is the more powerful, binding, influential and constructive; "the power of the king, the influence of wine, the charms of woman, or the

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<sup>574</sup> Umberto Eco, *Serendipities* (New York: Mariner Books, 1999), 7.

strength of truth”<sup>575</sup>? Eco notes that Aquinas’ response “respected the king, at whose table he did not, I believe, reject a few good glasses of wine, though he proved he could resist woman’s charms.”<sup>576</sup> Ultimately, though Aquinas concluded “*non sunt unius generis* (they do not belong to the same category)”<sup>577</sup> and thus beyond direct compare, Eco maintains that, nevertheless, “all can stir the human heart to some action”<sup>578</sup> and, in this sense are, indeed, comparable. Eco finds of note Aquinas’ deference to the power of the king and readily agrees that “as for the practical intellect, it is obvious that the king’s will has power over it, the command of law.”<sup>579</sup> Yet, mightier even than the practical concerns that the king’s will may sway, “the only force that moves the speculative intellect is truth....and thus truth is stronger than anything else.”<sup>580</sup>

In Peirce’s scientific method of inquiry, Truth is the goal of the universal coordinated efforts of the ideal community of inquirers. In the method of authority, however, “truth” is whatever beliefs the power interests seek to perpetuate by imposing them forcibly upon its populace, beliefs that, undoubtedly, are to the benefit of the power interests themselves. Thus, the line between practical and theoretical concerns is not as distinct as it might initially seem: for if Truth, as Eco here notes, holds sway over speculative intellect, how easily it is that “Truth” can be actively manipulated by the “king” whose authority may clearly extend past the practical concerns of the individual by usurping the province of truth itself. As Eco notes, “such is the power of truth. But

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<sup>575</sup> Eco here references *Quaestio quodlibetalis* XII, 14: “utrum veritas sit fortior inter vinum et regem et mulierem,” *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>577</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 – 2.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

experience teaches us that often the imposition of truth has been delayed, and its acceptance has come at the price of blood and tears.”<sup>581</sup>

As a good Peircian, Eco notes that every notion “is subject to revision on the basis of new discoveries”<sup>582</sup> but at any specific historical moment, a slew of beliefs, culturally accepted, are true and “until proved otherwise we believe, as factual truth”<sup>583</sup> that they remain the reality of things.

At this point it can be said that, over the course of history, beliefs and affirmations that today’s encyclopedia categorically denies have been given credence and indeed believed so completely as to subjugate the learned, generate and destroy empires, inspire poets (not always witnesses to the truth)<sup>584</sup>, and drive human beings to heroic sacrifices, intolerance, massacre, the quest for knowledge. If this is true, how can we not assert that a Force of the False exists?<sup>585</sup>

Eco gives us several historical examples of the method of authority in action. Although Peirce had faith that, over the long run, false beliefs would be challenged and reformulated, that process may be delayed for any number of reasons all stemming from the adaptation of one or another (or several at once) of the counterproductive methods of belief formation, especially if the Truth is not conducive to some authority’s agenda. For example, there was the reticence of the Church to accept a heliocentric model of the universe, effectively hamstringing the method of inquiry by demanding its interpretation, based on Scripture, of the make-up of the cosmos. From the perspective of the Church itself, Peirce might argue that it, itself, was subject to the method of tenacity: clinging against all evidence to the contrary to a geocentric model. From the perspective of the

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<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>582</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>584</sup> Plato made this observation through the ruminations of his protagonist, Socrates, in “The Apology.”

<sup>585</sup> Eco, *Serendipities*, *Op. Cit.*, 3.



people under the sway of the Church, however, they were clearly under the sway of the method of authority perpetuated by that institution as scientists were persuaded, under threat, to alter their findings and, when this was not possible, to sweep these findings under the proverbial carpet.

One historical example that Eco provides is that of the Donation of Constantine.

As he notes:

Today, thanks to Lorenzo Valla, we know that the Document was not authentic. And yet, without that document, without a profound belief in its authenticity, European history would have followed a different course: no conflict over investitures, no mortal struggle for the Holy Roman Empire, no temporal power of the popes, no slap at Agnani, but also no Sistine Chapel, which was created after the Donation was called into question but could still be constructed because for centuries the Donation continued to be thought genuine.<sup>586</sup>

Eco adds a new wrinkle to the method of authority: under its rule, positive (beneficial) results may occur. The fact that false beliefs in some way contributed to the construction of the Sistine Chapel in no way diminishes its very real beauty and the very real inspiration it perpetuated for the centuries since its construction.

But not all fabrications perpetuated under the method of authority have such benevolent side effects. Consider his central example, the Letter of Prester John. It was the second half of the twelfth century that found Frederick the Great, the Holy Roman Emperor, anxious to expand his kingdom east and conquer the lands of the Muslims that had so often been taken and taken back to the point where men tired of conflict populated his kingdom. Miraculously, a letter arrived at his court that spoke of a mystical land, a true Eden, ruled by Prester John (“Presbyter Johannes,” “priest John”), a paragon of Christian virtue. Coincidentally, in order to get to this land, as per John’s kind invitation,

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<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

the Muslim territories would have to be traversed - precisely (coincidentally?) as Frederick had desired all along.

In the course of the following centuries – until the seventeenth – translated and paraphrased many times into various languages and versions, the letter had a decisive importance in the expansion of the Christian West toward the Orient. The idea that beyond the Moslem territories there could be a Christian kingdom justified all ventures of expansion and exploration.<sup>587</sup>

The letter itself was a work of exceptional genius,<sup>588</sup> riddled with fancies and fairytales that pushed the boundaries of what any human being could rationally accept as factual. It spoke of manna falling from the sky, diamonds the size of a man's hand sitting idle along riverbanks, and creatures of every description roaming the lands: from white bears to phoenixes, centaurs to cyclopes. Even in the twelfth century, it pushes the boundaries of possibility that anyone could have possibly believed the letter was genuine, so extreme were its claims of a paradise on earth, free from sin, where men and women lived in perpetual youth and happiness.<sup>589</sup> Nevertheless, it was taken as genuine; the reason Frederick needed was given, and the political landscape of Europe was changed at the price of countless lives, Christian, Jew, and Muslim alike.

Where did Prester John's letter come from? What was its purpose? Perhaps it was a document of anti-Byzantine propaganda, produced in the scriptoria of Frederick I. But the problem is not so much its origin (fakes of every description were abundant at that time) as its reception. The geographical fantasy gradually generated a political project. In other words, the phantom called up by some scribe with a knack for counterfeiting documents (a highly respected literary activity of the period) served as an alibi for the expansion of the Christian world toward Africa and Asia, a welcome argument favoring the white man's burden.<sup>590</sup>

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<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>588</sup> A fictional account of its conception was the basis for Eco's novel *Baudolino*.

<sup>589</sup> See pp. 8 – 9 in Eco's *Serendipities* for a short translation of the letter, *Op. Cit.*

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 – 10.

As significant as its reception was, I disagree with Eco, from a Peircian perspective, that its origins were of less importance than its reception. The origins were not, clearly, in accord with the method of inquiry but, rather, the method of authority, since “inquiries” hence have yielded no such kingdom, it follows that the letter was most assuredly an artificial construct created for the purpose of eastern expansion to the benefit of the ruling power. As Eco notes in an essay he published on Peirce’s philosophy some years before *Serendipities*:

The self-sufficiency of the universe of content, provided by a given culture, explains why signs can be used to lie. We have a sign-function when something can be used in order to lie (and therefore to elaborate ideologies, works of art and so on). What Peirce calls signs (which stand to somebody for something else in some respect or capacity) are constituted in my mere use of a representamen in order to refer to a fictitious state of the world. Even an index<sup>591</sup> can be falsified in order to signify an event that is not detectable and in fact has never caused its supposed representamen.<sup>592</sup>

The people believed. For, as Eco rightly notes, “false tales are, first of all, tales, and tales, like myths, are always persuasive.”<sup>593</sup>

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<sup>591</sup> Peirce defined an “index” in the following way: “An *Index* or *Seme*†1 ({séma}) is a Representamen whose Representative character consists in its being an individual second. If the Secondness is an existential relation, the Index is *genuine*. If the Secondness is a reference, the Index is *degenerate*. A genuine Index and its Object must be existent individuals (whether things or facts), and its immediate Interpretant must be of the same character. But since every individual must have characters, it follows that a genuine Index may contain a Firstness, and so an Icon as a constituent part of it. Any individual is a degenerate Index of its own characters,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 2.283. Since an “index” is associated with Secondness, for Peirce, it would follow that it would be an encountered object or fact that is juxtaposed to the Icon, or “Firstness.” Whatever is an index itself is likewise an object or fact in its own right, and thus there is, as Peirce states, something of Firstness in this Secondness, for the encountered object or fact is itself an Icon in its on right and an Index in relation to the Icon which encounters it. What Eco illuminates here is the possibility that that which is encountered in a moment of Secondness may itself be wholly fabricated (that is, refer to nothing existent beyond the relation to the Icon). A human being, for example, may react to a fact that is false (without knowing it’s false, initially) just as an individual may react to a fact that is true (in the Peircean sense of a “true” belief, at least). Whether the index corresponds to anything existent in reality does not negate its very real impact on the experience of the individual encountering it.

<sup>592</sup> Umberto Eco, “Peirce’s Notion of the Interpretant,” *MLN* 91, no. 6 (1976): 1457 – 1472, 1459.

<sup>593</sup> Eco, *Serendipities*, *Op. Cit.*, 19.

Let us forget for a moment that some of these false tales produced positive effects, while others produced horror and shame. All created something, for better or worse. Nothing in their success is inexplicable. What represents a problem is rather the way they managed to replace other tales that today we consider true.<sup>594</sup>

Peirce provided us with the answer in his articulation of the method of authority. Indeed, Eco himself concludes his analysis of the force of falsity with a reference to Peirce and his community of inquirers, clearly not in play in the perpetuation of the Prester John myth. And these are but a smattering of examples in which power interests have actively manipulated the “true” so significantly that these fabrications changed the course of human history.

Eco does grant us one Peircian positive consequence of the realization, years later, that these “truths” and the beliefs that they created and the beliefs that perpetuated that “truth” in the face of growing evidence to their contrary. He says:

At most, recognizing that our history was inspired by many tales we now recognize as false should make us alert, ready to call constantly into question the very tales we believe true, because the criterion of the wisdom of the community is based on constant awareness of the fallibility of our learning...after all, the cultivated person’s first duty is to be always prepared to rewrite the encyclopedia.<sup>595</sup>

The method itself is a safeguard against the method of authority, reminding us that all truths, all beliefs, must be subjected to communal discourse and experimentation and any claim made by a power interest, any claim of timeless certainty or essentialism, must be treated with the suspicion it’s due.

With the method of inquiry, there is no entity separate from the community itself, that is, no institution generating the rules of inquiry and indoctrinating citizens with

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<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 – 21.

specific, pre-established beliefs. In other words, as a *method*, it is necessarily free from the narrow confines of instrumentalism as Horkheimer defines it. The community, itself, cannot be a replacement “authority,” a swapping of some totalitarian monarch for a more benevolent dictator, for the *method* of inquiry ascribes *no* values, truths, and goals of inquiry (save for seeking Truth itself)<sup>596</sup> *a priori*, which would thereby relegate human cognition to the seeking of means (instrumentalism) to goals externally prescribed. The community (and each free-participant therein) is the goal-setter, not the means-finder. The method seeks a Truth external to any finite number of individual beliefs (as the culmination of inquiry at the end of the long run) and by playing against a Secondness that is, itself, external to the beliefs of the inquirers themselves. Peirce’s fallibilism, his first rule of reason, his rejection of dogmatism, all conspire to safeguard inquiry against the blockades that an authority would seek to erect and narrow the channels of inquiry which ought otherwise be as wide and diverse as the human imagination; channels that, of course, reify the beliefs proliferated by the authority, setting goals and values *for* the inquirers, external to them, in a purely instrumental fashion. There is solidarity in *both* communities under the aegis of authority as well as within the ideal community of inquirers. The former is inauthentic, forged of indoctrination to pre-established beliefs, immersed in instrumentalism (where reason is deployed solely to discover the means to ends prescribed by some power external to the inquirer him or herself), and solidified

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<sup>596</sup> The quest for a Truth lacking in *a priori* assumed content is a problem for verificationists, of which Peirce certainly subscribed to some degree. Although beliefs, as I’ve explored, contain nascent within themselves certain expected conclusions, operating as guiding principles for inquiry, those conclusions are only *expected*, not ensured, and exist *in futuro* with greater, or lesser, probability of being achieved depending on the present efficacy of belief forged of prior inquiries. The abductive component of inquiry was hypothesis, or as Peirce in his more poetic moments, liked to call “a guess at the riddle,” and thus always swim in a haze of indeterminacy, though to greater or lesser degrees depending upon the nature of the hypothesis itself. But even the most probable outcomes of inquiry are only ever probable, making their content a matter of greater, or lesser, probability.

with fear, oppression, and alienation. In such a milieu, Peirce was the first to advocate a radical form of atomic individualism, his individuals of wider social feeling, that do *not* submit to the beliefs they are exposed to but rise above them through critique. The latter is an authentic solidarity forged of merging one's interests with one's neighbor in the absence of an authoritarian power: with that blockade removed, and in a milieu wherein the method of inquiry may flourish, Peirce advocated a radical form of *social* individualism, of solidarity, wherein only together may we *all* progress further towards the Truth at the end of the long run.

By pitting his ideal method of inquirers against the community in the method of authority and by supplying us with a robust and dynamic social psychology in which human flourishing demands open dialogue,<sup>597</sup> communication in community, and nothing to block the path of inquiry, Peirce effectively fleshed out all of the signs we must look for that might indicate whether we are living under the repressive regime of authority. As such, Peirce's robust social psychology, his rule of reason, his metaphysical commitments, his semiotics, all coalesce to provide us with a most unique and dynamic form of critical theory,<sup>598</sup> exposing the structures of authority the institution would rather keep invisible demonstrating the ways in which such an institution blocks inquiry and,

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<sup>597</sup> This, of course, would include an open dialogue with those who both believe in and benefit from the authority structure, a more hazy area in Peirce's "Fixation" wherein he does not depict dialogical engagement across methods of inquiry as deeply as he delved into the different methods themselves. A dialogue between an individual submissive to authority and one of Peirce's individuals with "wider social feeling" operating with the method of inquiry ought to produce, in the former, the requisite doubt and tension necessary to escape from out of the authority's thrall. That is not to say that such a dialogue would contradict the beliefs proliferated by the authority, for many of those beliefs may well be quite "true," but only to place those beliefs in an arena wherein the *reasons* for adopting that belief are more than mere submission to authority. But Peirce provided us no concrete examples of what such a dialogue would look like nor did he explicitly address what would happen if a terminal number of individuals refused to escape from the authority's thrall.

<sup>598</sup> In my concluding chapters, I will address some critical theorists' objections to pragmatism, in general, and discuss the ways in which Peirce's pragmatism does, and does not, reflect some of the most fundamental principles of several of the more prominent figures in that tradition.

ultimately, stagnates human cognitive development and dissolves any pretense of authentic, autonomous human freedom.

As Talisse notes, only the method of inquiry leads “to a democratic political context.”<sup>599</sup> What separates the community in the method of inquiry from the community within the method of authority is precisely this difference between dogmatism and the necessary call to fallibilism and revisionism. No elite group of individuals may determine truth (this manifests both in the method of authority as well as the *a priori* method and undermines any critic’s claim that Peirce was simply replacing Plato’s “philosopher kings” with “scientist kings”). As Talisse notes, the method of science involves, at least potentially, “the participation of the entire community”<sup>600</sup>:

Unlike the methods of authority and a priority, which depend upon a *community of doctrine*, the method of science depends upon a *community of inquiry*. A community of inquiry is committed not to any particular set of beliefs, but rather to continuing inquiry...whereas the non-scientific methods are aimed at preserving some particular set of beliefs, the community of inquiry is committed to preserving the *worthiness* of its beliefs.<sup>601</sup>

Dogmatism has no place in the method of science save for a strict adherence to the method itself that, as we’ve seen, is self-correcting and perpetually open to revision (indeed, revision is encouraged<sup>602</sup>). The difference between the non-scientific methods and the method of inquiry is the difference between “*belief preservation*” and “*belief correction*,”<sup>603</sup> respectively. The former implies apodictic claims to truth, essentialism,

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<sup>599</sup> Talisse, “Towards a Peircean Politics of Inquiry,” *Op. Cit.*, p. 25

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>602</sup> As Talisse notes, “the beliefs of the community of inquiry are always subject to revision,” *Ibid.*

<sup>603</sup> *Ibid.*

the end of inquiry, wherein the latter implies the constant engagement with others, the testing of beliefs in communal dialogue, and the perpetual growth of knowledge.

With this in mind, “the relation countenanced by pragmatists between the self-corrective method of scientific inquiry and the self-governing processes of democratic politics can now be stated.”<sup>604</sup> Indeed, the possibility of an ideal Peircean community of inquirers relies upon the reality of a true democratic state<sup>605</sup> for “the essence of democracy lies in its non-dogmatic, participatory, public, and experimental processes of decision.”<sup>606</sup> This is clear from the failure of the method of inquiry to thrive in authoritarian communities for, as Peirce noted, though *in general* the method of authority will ultimately not hold on a case-by-case, community-by-community basis, nevertheless it may endure for countless centuries in one form or another and, even when dissolved (ostensibly) in one community, may well just crop up in another. As Putnam notes, “democracy is a requirement for experimental inquiry in any area. To reject democracy is to reject the idea of being experimental.”<sup>607</sup> Similarly, Misak notes “the requirements of genuine belief show that we must, broadly speaking, be democratic inquirers.”<sup>608</sup> For just as proper inquiry could not unfold under the totalitarian grasp of the method of authority, nor the elitist *a priori* method, “proper *political* inquiry cannot occur in isolation or among only a small group of pre-selected elites. A properly deliberative community must be a democratic community,”<sup>609</sup> and vice versa.

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<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>605</sup> As Talisse notes, “in fact, on the pragmatist view, science and democracy are mutually dependent: scientific inquiry can be practiced only within a democratic political context, and the processes of democracy require a citizenry collectively engaged in proper inquiry,” *Ibid.*

<sup>606</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>607</sup> Hilary Putnam in G. Borradori, *The American Philosopher* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 64.

<sup>608</sup> Cheryl Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 106.

<sup>609</sup> Talisse, “Towards a Peircean Politics of Inquiry,” *Op. Cit.*, p. 28.



A genuinely democratic arena, requisite for the flourishing of the method of inquiry, must be as “inclusive, open, and egalitarian as possible”<sup>610</sup> to eschew the problems of the previous three methods (individual isolationism, dogmatism, etc.) as well as maintain “a self-critical and experimentalist posture towards its own processes”<sup>611</sup> in accord with the demands of the method’s fallibilism, revisionism and the first rule of reason. As Misak notes,

The pragmatist...supports a kind of radical democracy in inquiry. Belief involves being prepared to try to justify one’s views to others and being prepared to test one’s beliefs against the experience of others. Thus the differences of inquirers – their different perspectives, sensibilities, and experiences – *must* be taken seriously. If they are not, reaching the best or the true belief is not on the cards.<sup>612</sup>

Eschewing the possibility of dogmatism, the pragmatist, in support of a radical democracy of inquiry, demands the necessary interplay of different beliefs, the genesis of the undermining of the method of tenacity.

It is important to note that there is no authority within the ideal community of inquirers. As I, and others, have highlighted before, Peirce was not advocating any sort of abnormal veneration of scientists nor claiming that Truth was confined only to the realm *of* science, nor advocating any form of *scientism*. He was not, as others have noted, attempting to replace a Platonic legion of philosopher kings with a new entourage of scientist kings. Expert testimony certainly matters, of course, but fallibilism obtains even in the realm of the most advanced laboratories. Nor is “consensus” the new authority in the ideal community of inquirers for, as I noted above, consensus did *not* determine Truth, for Peirce, it is merely a good indication that Truth, to that ever-relative degree,

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<sup>610</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>611</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>612</sup> Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality, Op. Cit.*, 94.

may well have been achieved.<sup>613</sup> As I discussed, there is an objective component of inquiry, an external gauge, that guides (though doesn't absolutely determine) the unfolding process of investigation.<sup>614</sup> Although beliefs *do* contribute to the construction of Reality (in Thirdness), an individual operating within the method of inquiry simply cannot believe whatever he or she desires for some beliefs will invariably run into the resistance of Secondness, an external world that simply won't budge no matter how hard we wish to believe it otherwise (which explains the method of tenacity's inability to last in the long run). As Peirce said, "Secondness" is the mode of "existence" in so far as it is that "mode of being which lies in opposition to another...A thing without opposition *ipso*

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<sup>613</sup> There remains, however, the question of "power," namely, does the individual who *understands* that the method of inquiry (rather than any of the other methods his/her neighbors may subscribe to) leads more unerringly towards Truth in the long run, have power over the individuals enmeshed in other methods of belief formation? Peirce did not address this explicitly, as far as I've seen, but given his somewhat disgusted dismissal of those individuals who may well just be better off "intellectual slaves" if they so insist on living their lives submissive to authority, I would speculate that Peirce would say that the individual who understands how best to approximate Truth would, indeed, have some power over those who do not. How this power would manifest is equally unclear, if it would manifest at all. Dialogically, the individual operating with the method of inquiry would likely have some power over an individual who is merely clinging tenaciously to some belief or one who passively submits, unquestioningly, to the beliefs of an authority, as Socrates always appeared to have the advantage over his interlocutors, whether or not he actually possessed the definitions of the universal ethical terms he proposed to be seeking. In terms of a *political* power, since the objects of inquiry are objective for Peirce, that is, open to all to inquire, no single individual nor group of individuals could ever have some sacred monopoly on Truth, or the approximation thereof.

<sup>614</sup> For Peirce, especially given his metaphysical commitments later in his career, the *process* of inquiry was evolving, too. Peirce maintained that the universe was becoming more law-like over time, flux giving way to order, where even laws (laws of logic, laws of science, and so forth) were, initially, more chaotic and less law-like than they are now. Intriguingly, scientists at Spain's University of Salamanca corroborate that general principle in noting that time, itself, appears to be slowing down as an increasing rigidity and stasis seems to be permeating the cosmos over vast epochs until, potentially, all reality, as we know it, would freeze, permanently, in place. The general thrust of Peirce's metaphysical speculation on the movement of chaos to order can be seen, however, in nascent form in his theory of inquiry: consensus increases over time, if the method of inquiry is engaged and earnestly persisted in, as beliefs become firmer over the long run, where doubts and problematic situations occur less and less often and the adaptation to changing conditions is swifter when problems *do* arise, given the increasing bank of knowledge inquirers have at their disposal, until, at least, hypothetically, we arrive at an ultimate consensus of beliefs that are so "true" they are unassailable by future doubt, effectively ending inquiry with the arrival at Truth. But precisely because inquiry was open-ended, for Peirce, this arrival was only ever hypothetical, and the more likely situation was an increasing approximation, asymptotically, which nevertheless would reflect that increasing concretization of beliefs, more and more unassailable by doubt, though perhaps never entirely so.

*facto* does not exist.”<sup>615</sup> Further, “when we say that a thing exists what we mean is that it reacts upon other things.”<sup>616</sup> As Almeder notes, “Peirce, in his treatment of the category of Secondness, maintained that the compulsiveness (or Secondness) of our perceptual experience guarantees the externality of the object which we perceive.”<sup>617</sup> It is the “brutality or *haecceity*”<sup>618</sup> of the encroachment of a world that resists inquiry if the guiding principles are faulty and that aligns *with* it when our beliefs are accurate.

Without such an objective standard there would be no rubric, no measuring stick, against which to judge the efficacy of our beliefs and bring contrary beliefs into tension in such a way as to relieve that tension dialogically. Precisely because our guiding principles are often foiled, this experience of “Secondness,” though experienced subjectively as a category of phenomenological experience, is not *generated* by the unique inquirer but has its source in something external to that specific inquiring mind, for we experience the pain of fire lashing our skin whether or not we desire it. As Potter notes, it is “to recognize that we cannot think whatever we want and that wishing will not necessarily make it so.”<sup>619</sup>

As inquiry progresses, over time, initially divergent beliefs, playing off of the same externality for all inquirers, will, invariably, converge more and more. True, as I’ve argued, Secondness is not wholly objective: it is, after all, a phenomenological category of experience (the experience *of* resistance) and thus the beliefs that a specific inquirer has will in some way inform the experience *of* this resistance. Nevertheless, as Peirce

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<sup>615</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.435. Further, “the mode of being of an individual thing (Secondness) is existence and existence lies in opposition merely,” CP 1.458.

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 7.534.

<sup>617</sup> Robert Almeder, “Charles Peirce and the Existence of the External World,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 4, no. 2 (Spring 1968): 63 – 79, 63 – 64.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>619</sup> Vincent G. Potter, S.J., *Charles S. Peirce: On Norms and Ideals* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967), 76 - 77.

insisted, there is an aspect of inquiry that is over and above what any number of finite inquirers has to say about it. Consensus *does* happen, *has* happened, on a variety of topics throughout our long intellectual history: arguments about geocentricity vs. heliocentricity are obsolete and concerns about global warming, in our own time, are no longer a problem of *scientific* consensus but, rather, a problem only of the tenacious or authoritarian-influenced clinging to beliefs out of sync of the consensus of the community of authentic inquirers. Indeed, recent publications on the topic *by* members of that community of inquirers reveal a distinctly Peircean tone and approach to inquiry in general:

There is a strong, credible body of evidence, based on multiple lines of research, documenting that climate is changing and that these changes are in large part caused by human activities. While much remains to be learned, the core phenomenon, scientific questions, and hypotheses have been examined thoroughly and have stood firm in the face of serious scientific debate and careful evaluation of alternative explanations.<sup>620</sup>

The strength and credibility of this consensus view is “based on multiple lines of research” rather than a uni-dimensional line of inquiry; a diverse array of different techniques and approaches all culminating in the same, general conclusion over long spans of time. Further, in good scientific fashion, the consensus, itself, admits of fallibilism and incompleteness, noting, “much remains to be learned.” Nevertheless, the “hypotheses,” the Peircean “beliefs” or “guiding principles” have “stood firm in the face of serious debate,” that is, serious challenging problematizing those beliefs including the engagement of radically “alternative explanations.” Further:

Some scientific conclusions or theories have been so thoroughly examined and tested, and supported by so many independent observations and

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<sup>620</sup> National Academies Press, *Advancing the Science of Climate Change* (New York: National Academies Press, 2010), 1.

results, that their likelihood of subsequently being found to be wrong is vanishingly small. Such conclusions and theories are then regarded as settled facts. This is the case for the conclusions that the Earth system is warming and that much of this warming is very likely due to human activities.<sup>621</sup>

As Peirce noted, a “true belief” is one that has been tested so thoroughly that it no longer encounters any problem that disrupts its trajectory towards its expected conclusion and, though the possibility always remains for its revision in the future, the likelihood of its reversal is “vanishingly small,” giving us good reason to accept its truth value, at least provisionally. As the study here says, precisely as Peirce would say himself, “such conclusions and theories are then regarded as settled facts,” “a finally compulsory belief,”<sup>622</sup> “a state of belief unassailable by doubt,”<sup>623</sup> and “not a matter of arbitrary choice.”<sup>624</sup> None of this would be possible if some objective conditions did not exist, independent of our diverse, individual beliefs at the onset of inquiry, that eventually lead to the data, the analysis, the debate, and the conclusions agreed upon by the majority of inquirers on this specific topic. As Peirce said, the “peripheral excitations” of the encountered world lead, “in the long run, toward certain predestinate conclusions which are the same for all men”<sup>625</sup> if the method of inquiry is adopted throughout a community of inquirers. “Belief gradually tends to fix itself under the influence of inquiry,”<sup>626</sup> not arbitrarily, but according to the very real tension inquiry experiences in its pursuit of the Truth. As Feibleman notes, “subjective belief is the result of objective truth...the compulsion must come from without, for we are not free to believe whatever we wish to

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<sup>621</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 – 22.

<sup>622</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 2.29.

<sup>623</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.416.

<sup>624</sup> James Feibleman, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Charles S. Peirce: Interpreted as a System* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1970), 238.

<sup>625</sup> Peirce., *Op. Cit.*, CP 3.161.

<sup>626</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 2.693.

believe; we can believe only what we must”<sup>627</sup> so long as we’re not succumbing to the method of tenacity.

Because of this objective gauge, only within the method of inquiry itself does consensus create a good reason to assume that, to a relative degree, Truth has been discovered. As we recall, the method of authority’s efficacy *relies* on consensus as well: individuals are conditioned to have the same belief-set, beliefs conducive to the perpetuation of that authoritarian power. As we’ll explore in full in the following chapters, in no small part this *was* what Marcuse meant by “one-dimensionality”: a monolithic belief-set, not forged of inquiry, but forged of indoctrination to a cultural milieu conditioned by those in power for the perpetuation *of* that hold on power.

However, Peirce’s designs on Truth, even though it exists only as a goal not-yet-achieved at the ideal end of the long run, lends itself to a hint of a monolithic design all its own. If there is one Truth, asymptotically approximated, Peirce’s method of inquiry runs headlong in into the problem of pluralism, namely, can multiple voices, multiple perspectives, diverse beliefs, co-exist and flourish side-by-side. What happens to those minority voices that dissent from the consensus view? Are they silenced like those in the method of authority?

Pluralism, as Talisse notes, “roughly stated...is the thesis that at least some, and perhaps many, disagreements over Big Questions are inevitable, irresolvable, non-contingent, and permanent. In other words, the pluralist denies that when such disagreement endures it is necessarily because some of us are misinformed, obstinate, irrational, or wicked.”<sup>628</sup> Talisse explores why Dewey, despite his application of

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<sup>627</sup> Feibleman, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Charles S. Peirce*, Op. Cit., 238.

<sup>628</sup> Robert Talisse, *A Pragmatist Philosophy of Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 34.

pragmatism to, specifically, democratic concerns, ultimately comes up short in offering a robust pluralism that I unfortunately can't engage here.<sup>629</sup> It would seem, at first glance, that precisely *because* of the objectivism and realism in Peirce, there's an even more diminished likelihood he could forward a robust pluralism. If the goal of inquiry is a unified, "ultimate opinion" shared by *all* inquirers, what possibility is there for a mutually compatible, but ultimate distinct, belief-systems and ideologies living side by side in a single nation?<sup>630</sup>

Peirce prescribed no beliefs, ideologies, nor truths in his manifestation of pragmatism. To *prescribe* a belief would be little more than succumbing to the *a priori* method of belief formation or, in its proliferation to others, assuming the position of authority. Whereas Dewey prescribes a *theory* of democracy, Peirce gave us a *method* by which to form democracy or, rather, a method that *demand*s democracy in order to flourish at all. What Talisse calls "epistemic pluralism," Peirce's pragmatism did not adjudicate as to the answers to any of the "Big Questions" precisely because those inquiries are still ongoing. What he *did* provide, however, was a hyperbolically inclusive method by which those Big Questions may be engaged by the widest breadth of inquiries imaginable. Further, although "Truth" may exist down the long run of inquiry, a unified opinion that all are destined to share, precisely because this "Truth" has not yet *been* achieved, and may well never *be* achieved apodictically, in the here and now Peirce's pragmatism not only allowed for pluralism but *demand*ed it as the only way by which these distinct beliefs may encounter one another in authentic dialogue. If some beliefs

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<sup>629</sup> See Talisse, *Ibid.*, ch. 2.

<sup>630</sup> A search for a Peircean pluralism would eventually stumble into the "seeming bedrock of his position: his claims of the convergence toward the final ultimate opinion of the community of interpreters in the idealized long run," Sandra B. Rosenthal, *Charles Peirce's Pragmatic Pluralism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), ix.

should prove more conducive to democratic values than others, that is a consequence *of* inquiry, not something assumed from its start. Precisely because the Truth will only ever hypothetically be achieved somewhere down the long run of inquiry's unfolding, *until* that destined moment, by his first rule of reason, no blockade of inquiry is permitted and thus pluralism may flourish far more fully than a manifestation of pragmatism wherein democratic ideals, benevolent as they may be, are prescribed from the get-go.

As Goudge notes, "Peirce makes frequent references to the co-operative nature of inquiry."<sup>631</sup> For example, Peirce said, "the progress of science cannot go far except by collaboration; or, to speak more accurately, no mind can take one step without the aid of other minds."<sup>632</sup> As we've seen, Peirce did not mean abnormally to venerate scientists over intellectuals in other fields, rather, as Goudge notes, "a true scientist," for Peirce, "attaches positive value to the view of every man as competent as himself,"<sup>633</sup> regardless of his or her intellectual pedigree. "For Peirce, the pursuit of knowledge...was not an individual concern. It was, in fact, the opposite: it was social praxis, the creation of a community of inquirers."<sup>634</sup> Although the member of this community of inquirers will regard "wide divergence from the convictions of the great body of scientific men as tending of itself to argue incompetence,"<sup>635</sup> for a wide variety of reasons, that inquirer cannot discount contrary beliefs *a priori*. To do so would violate Peirce's first rule of reason (never block the path of inquiry),<sup>636</sup> would succumb to the method of tenacity (the refusal to engage in dialogue with this particular contrary belief) and, in a sense, succumb

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<sup>631</sup> Thomas Goudge, *The Thought of Peirce* (The University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 1950), 25.

<sup>632</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 2.220.

<sup>633</sup> Goudge, *The Thought of Peirce, Op. Cit.*, 25.

<sup>634</sup> Joseph Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 88.

<sup>635</sup> Goudge, *The Thought of Peirce, Op. Cit.*, 25.

<sup>636</sup> "Peirce's theme here is the old and familiar one of opposition to restrictions placed on inquiry, restrictions that would block inquiry at the outset," Idus Murphree, "Peirce: The Experimental Nature of Belief," *The Journal of Philosophy* 60, no. 12 (June 1963): 309 – 317, 314.



to the method of authority, if “authority” has become the scientific community itself and all beliefs passed along to a populace from such a community become unquestioned dogma. That is all to say, the minority voice within the community of inquirers *must*, on principle, be engaged by the rest of the community, tested, and either validated (bringing about a paradigmatic shift in thought for the entire community) or else rejected, but at least for some positive, demonstrable reason forged of inquiry itself.

For example, we may take Peirce’s critique of Comte’s “assertion that men would never be able to discover the chemical composition of the stars.”<sup>637</sup> Auguste Comte certainly possessed the intellectual capacities to engage in the community of inquirers. However, no sooner did Comte make his belief manifest, that “the ink was scarcely dry upon the printed page before the spectroscope was discovered and that which he had deemed absolutely unknowable was well on the way of getting ascertained.”<sup>638</sup> In Peirce’s critique of *a priori* unknowables, a “bar which philosophers often set up across the roadway of inquiry,” violating his first rule of reason, “in maintaining that this, that, and the other never can be known,”<sup>639</sup> Comte’s belief was quickly integrated into the community and just as quickly overturned, not on the *a priori* grounds Comte, himself, utilized to make his belief clear but, rather, through rigorous scientific engagement and inquiry by the whole of the community at large. As Peirce said, “it is easy enough to mention a question the answer to which is not known to me today. But to aver that that answer will not be known tomorrow is somewhat risky; for oftentimes it is precisely the least expected truth which is turned up under the ploughshare of research.”<sup>640</sup>

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<sup>637</sup> Goudge, *The Thought of Peirce*, *Op. Cit.*, 42.

<sup>638</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.138.

<sup>639</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.*

Peirce's critique of Comte offered a good example of a member of the community with a viable belief<sup>641</sup> being incorporated into the ongoing inquiry, "extending" that inquiry to encapsulate his position. Drawing on what Peirce would likely call an example of the *a priori* method of belief formation, however, Comte's position was unable to hold "in the long run." Indeed, his position didn't even hold "in the short run." To say that Comte's position was "overturned" might irresponsibly imply that absolute certainty as to the nature of stars had been achieved which, for Peirce, fails his first rule of reason and violates his commitment to fallibilism. However, it is not so much with his conclusion that Peirce took issue but, rather, the method by which he *came* to that conclusion and the speed and efficiency with which the greater community engaged it, offering proof to the contrary, is a testament to the counterproductivity of the *a priori* method at play. Science, for Peirce, was a "living process," one that was "busied mainly with conjectures, which are either getting framed or getting tested."<sup>642</sup> For Peirce, "all propositions in philosophy must be held tentatively, (6.181) in the same way that scientific hypotheses are held, that is to say, always ready to be abandoned whenever the evidence of reason or of fact demands that they should be."<sup>643</sup> For, at base, though science strives towards Truth and certainty, it is a "pursuit of living men," fallible and flawed, and "the life of science is in the desire to learn."<sup>644</sup> Comte's position, according, at least, to Peirce's critique of it,

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<sup>641</sup> His assertion was not immediately repugnant and only in light of the concurrent scientific research into spectroscopic analysis did it prove so quickly inadequate.

<sup>642</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, 1.234.

<sup>643</sup> Feibleman, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Charles S. Peirce*, *Op. Cit.*, 52.

<sup>644</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.235. Again, this is a psychological claim and raises the question as to whether this desire is an essential characteristic of human beings. Although human beings *can* have this desire to learn, as Peirce demonstrated in his critique of the methods of tenacity and authority, especially, that desire need not manifest or else may, on occasion, be repressed either by the individual him/herself or by some external compulsion like an authority. This is further complicated by Peirce's organicism, his perennial framing of inquiry as transactions between organisms and environments. Only the method of inquiry (complete with its "desire to learn") can potentially lead to permanent equilibrium (unassailable by doubt and disruption)

made no such tentative claim but, rather, made a definitive claim which didn't *extend* the desire to learn so much as slam the door shut on future avenues of inquiry in maintaining that we would *never* know, nor *could ever* know, the composition of stars. It would be no exaggeration to say that such a position is the antithesis of Peirce's entire philosophical enterprise and it is to Comte's method, more than his conclusion, which Peirce took to task.

For an example of the converse, namely, a belief from an individual inquirer being accepted by the majority of inquirers, we might turn to Charles Darwin, whom Peirce greatly admired.<sup>645</sup> There remain, even today, tensions over Darwin's theory and in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, all the more so. Even Peirce was unconvinced of its long-term efficacy, noting in 1893, "to a sober mind its case looks less hopeful now than it did twenty years ago."<sup>646</sup> Nevertheless, over time (in the long run, as it were), Darwin's theory (or, at least, substantial parts of it) has gone from a minority belief within the scientific community to a relatively established norm.

Mounce notes, as inquiry proceeds, "it will adopt perspectives wider than that of ordinary practice, which it may cause us to alter or amend. But it will never eliminate that perspective."<sup>647</sup> Should the need arise to revisit a previously marginalized belief, which may occur in light of new information in the future, that belief will be ready-at-hand as

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which, presumably, is precisely what organisms, naturalistically, desire. The method of tenacity will crumble over time since we cannot all be hermits; the method authority, too, will collapse given enough time, but in the interim, and for vast stretches of time, these methods may hold sway, effectively offering the organism (inquirer) the equilibrium it desires, negating the need for the desire to learn. But though that desire is not always operative, over the long run, the desire to learn inherent in the method of inquiry is the only means to achieve the permanent equilibrium that the organism seeks. Thus, I would speculate on Peirce's behalf, that this desire to learn *is* an essentially human quality in the long run, the counterproductive methods of belief formation, for as long as they prove efficient in establishing some temporary equilibrium, may repress this desire for a time.

<sup>645</sup> "Peirce was a warm defender of the biological theory of evolution. When Darwin's work first appeared, he was immediately impressed," Goudge, *The Thought of C.S. Peirce*, *Op. Cit.*, 227.

<sup>646</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.297

<sup>647</sup> H.O. Mounce, *The Two Pragmatisms: From Peirce to Rorty* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 25.

already part of the accepted belief, having been incorporated into the trajectory of inquiry leading to the present moment.

But we are speaking of minority and majority beliefs within an egalitarian community of inquirers. Indeed, it is an *ideal* community of inquirers, as Peirce has said. But within a nation governed to some degree by the method of authority, it is not merely minority and majority *beliefs* that must be engaged but *power* majorities and minorities that contribute to the trajectory of inquiry in all of the debilitating ways Peirce enumerated in “Fixation of Belief.” Distinct from *numerical* majorities, a power majority *is* the authority of Peirce’s critique. Consider Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” in which he says:

You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word ‘tension.’ I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. The purpose of our direct action program is to create a situation so crisis packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue.<sup>648</sup>

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<sup>648</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” 1963, accessed April 21, 2016, [https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles\\_Gen/Letter\\_Birmingham.html](https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html).

The “tension” that King advocates, a non-violent sort of tension, is precisely the tension that arises from the meeting of mutually opposing beliefs in *dialogue*, the very thing that ends the method of tenacity, according to Peirce. As Talisse notes,

Open mindedness, willingness to listen to others respectfully, ability to challenge views responsibly, readiness to change one’s mind when considerations so require, and, more generally, the disposition to *critically engage* in cooperative and constructive dialogue – *these* are the virtues of inquiry.<sup>649</sup>

As Cooke and others have indicated through their analyses of Peirce’s fallibilism in conjunction with his first rule of reason, “open mindedness” and the attitude that one possesses *before* engaging in inquiry is critical to inquiry’s success to some degree. The “open mindedness” that Talisse is referring to here is in respect to the necessary “cooperative” and dialogical engagement requisite for the flourishing of the method of inquiry in stark opposition to the method of tenacity which, as we’ve seen, is not at all conducive to knowledge acquisition. To never let anything block the road of inquiry, as the first rule of reason demands, would include one’s own preexisting close-mindedness, often manifesting in the tacit assumption that one is right and, conversely and subsequently, the other must be wrong. This rings of Peirce’s method of tenacity and negates the potential for genuine participation in a community of inquirers whose goal should *not* be to prove the other wrong but, rather, to communally strive towards the Truth. It is a *condition* of inquiry in the sense that the method he advocated necessarily entailed a fallibilism and openness to the revisability of one’s beliefs.<sup>650</sup> It is a

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<sup>649</sup> Talisse, “Towards a Peircean Politics of Inquiry,” *Op. Cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>650</sup> The on-going potential revisability of one’s beliefs, no matter how firm they may appear, would indicate that there’s no comfortable stasis for individuals engaged in the method of inquiry in the here and now. “Theoretically,” all beliefs, given Peirce’s fallibilism, *may* need to be revised in the future, but they may not necessarily have to be revised if no problematic situations occur to instill the doubt requisite for further

*precondition* of engaging in the method at all for, as can be seen subtly throughout Peirce's critique of the three counterproductive methods, within each is a distinct unwillingness to engage fully with the beliefs of others within that community of inquirers either through ignoring them entirely (tenacity), succumbing to the will of the state (authority), or leaning too heavily on fundamental premises not forged of the method itself (*a priority*).

As a *precondition* to inquiry, it is not easy to see how one acquires such an attitude to begin with. For Peirce, the answer lies in the nature of doubt itself, a state of disequilibrium out of which we struggle to free ourselves instinctively. None of the three counterproductive methods of belief formation mitigate against doubt over the long run and since each of the counterproductive beliefs entail a certain closed-mindedness it would follow that, ideally, individuals will come to make the connection between their adoption of a counterproductive method of belief formation, the inescapability of doubt by deploying that counterproductive method, and the closed-mindedness that is central to said method. Now, there is nothing to prevent an individual (let us take the tenacious individual) from simply receding back into his or her tenaciously held beliefs even *after* the inevitable exodus from intellectual hermitage unfolds. Likewise, there is nothing to prevent this for those individuals *without* that wider sort of social feeling within the method of authority, who would thereby remain condemned to such a structure of belief

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inquiry. Though we may never know if any of our current beliefs are beyond future revision, as Peirce claimed, it is likely that many of them *are already* beyond any future doubt. Simply put, for Peirce, he would caution us to never make the meta-claim of apodictic certainty ("I am certain that my belief is true") though the claim "my belief is true" is acceptable and offers a modicum of stasis and comfort until (or even "if") some reason for doubting that belief emerges (either through external, environmental stimuli or the purposeful hypothesizing of some potential alternative). Thus "practically" speaking, in the here and now, if beliefs continue to obtain day to day, that is, are demonstrably "true beliefs," we may rest secure (though never entirely secure) in their efficacy and some stability can be enjoyed so long as we remember that, by adhering to the first rule of reason, that we must not succumb to the temptation of dogmatically claiming that we have, ultimately, arrived at beliefs that will *never* be revised.

formation throughout their entire lives. Yet this resigned response does not negate the necessity of open-mindedness for the method of inquiry to flourish, nor does it undermine Peirce's insistence that of the four methods of belief formation, only the prescribed method is championed as both the most democratic and the most conducive to the (ideally) desired goal of attaining the Truth at the end of the long run.

This point is of great concern for Habermas who was profoundly influenced by Peirce's method of inquiry. In his *Truth and Justification*, for example, he provides a critique of Christina's Lafont's observations on precisely this point. Lafont maintained that moral questions operate in a fashion similar to ontological or epistemological questions when engaged in inquiry, namely, that if a single, specific correct answer was not presupposed to exist, inquiry would never (could never) be engaged in the first place:

Just as the presupposition of the existence of states of affairs in the objective world is the condition of possibility for a meaningful discussion about the truth of statements, the presupposition of the existence of a domain of generalizable interests is the condition of possibility for a meaningful discussion about the moral rightness of norms. The existence presupposition is unavoidable in practical discourse not because it is necessarily the case that there is such a domain among all human beings, but because if we came to the conclusion that this presupposition makes no sense (which is, obviously, an open empirical question) the discussion about the moral rightness of social norms would become meaningless.<sup>651</sup>

Habermas was critical of the assumption of a single correct answer prior to the engagement in inquiry and suggested, instead, that the answer is forged in inquiry itself.

As Habermas notes:

With the orientation toward a "single correct answer" we presuppose a principle of bivalence that we interpret ontologically keeping in mind the pair "true" and "false"; a statement's truth depends on whether the state of affairs it represents obtains or not. Lafont claims that we schematize the

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<sup>651</sup> Christina Lafont, "Pluralism and Universalism in Discourse Ethics," in *A Matter of Discourse: Community and Communication*, ed. A. Nascimento (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 1998), 68.

same principle in a similar fashion with regard to the rightness or wrongness of moral statements: the rightness of a norm is supposed to depend on whether it is equally in everyone's interest.<sup>652</sup>

Peirce would initially agree with both the presupposition of a "single correct answer" (Truth in the long run) as well as the bivalence of both "true" and "false" beliefs (in the here and now) insofar as the former "obtain," as Habermas says here, as beliefs that lead to the expected conclusions when tested. In keeping with Peirce's fallibilism, however, as we've seen, "true" beliefs only asymptotically approximate the Truth and become increasingly efficacious over time as fewer and fewer problems emerge to challenge the belief in question that, in turn, would force a return to inquiry on the matter in question. The "single correct answer" which Lafont seeks would be tantamount to a "permanently settled belief" for Peirce, the type that Peirce only postulated as the goal of inquiry over the long run. However, as I hinted at above, there is a difference between a *general* goal of inquiry and a *specific* one. Although Peirce would certainly claim the former (the general goal of inquiry is the permanently settled belief established by the unlimited community of inquirers over the long run), there is no specific belief that exists *prior to* that inquiry that must inevitably be established as *the* correct answer to inquiry's question. The specific belief that obtains, that is, that seems to be a permanently settled belief, is forged of inquiry itself and although it *may* be held by one or more of the initial inquiring parties prior to inquiry, it need not be necessarily so and is only established *as* the achieved goal of inquiry through inquiry itself, and not before. And, as ever for Peirce, that belief, no matter how apparently secure, is always only provisional.

Let us take one example from Habermas' critique of Lafont:

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<sup>652</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Truth and Justification*, trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 266.



The explication of justice as the “equal consideration of everyone’s interests” lies not at the beginning, but at the end. The procedural sense of the “worthiness of recognition” is initially explained in terms of the discourse principle according to which only those norms may claim to be valid that could command the assent of all those affected in their role as participants in discourse.<sup>653</sup>

For Peirce, if the goal of inquiry on this question is to establish what justice, actually, *is*, the belief that it is “equal consideration of everyone’s interests” *may* be a position taken up at the start of inquiry by one or more parties engaged in the dialogue, but it is only established as a viable belief through inquiry itself. Indeed, the far more likely scenario is as Habermas maintains, namely, that the belief that justice is “equal consideration of everyone’s interests” is a belief that is come upon *through* inquiry and not an assumed “right” answer prior to the onset of inquiry as a conclusion that *must* be reached but, rather, simply as a hypothetical possibility considered *potentially* “right” enough to motivate inquiry.

In taking seriously Habermas’ critique of Lafont, the method itself may still prove remarkably useful<sup>654</sup> for the establishment of beliefs that have practical, ethical and socio-political import. King, by way of example, sought to promote just such a Peircean “problematic situation” that created doubt, instigated inquiry, and moved towards a resolution that would not have otherwise been possible if the Southland remained irrevocably bogged down in *monologue* which is the very essence of Peirce’s method of tenacity, the ostrich with its head ever in the sand. As Young notes, giving us a

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<sup>653</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

<sup>654</sup> “Pragmatism is not a doctrine, but a method to be utilized in all areas of knowledge” including, as I argue throughout this investigation, the realm of the socio-political, despite Peirce’s protestations to use it as such. Bruce Altshuler, “The Nature of Peirce’s Pragmatism,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 14, no. 3 (Summer 1978): 147 – 175, 157.

thoroughly Peircean rejection of the methods of tenacity, authority and a priority all at once:

Reasonable participants in democratic discussion must have an open mind. They cannot come to the discussion of a collective problem with commitments that bind them to the authority of prior norms or unquestionable beliefs. Nor can they assert their own interests above all others' or insist that their initial opinion about what is right or just cannot be subject to revision. To be reasonable is to be willing to change our opinions or preferences because others persuade us that our initial opinions or preferences...are incorrect...Being open thus also refers to a disposition to listen to others, treat them with respect, make an effort to understand them by asking questions, and not judge them too quickly.<sup>655</sup>

Thus, like Socrates and King, we see the need for non-violent “gadflies” who are, to a great degree, agents of change and the emergence out of methods of tenacity and authority, in a Peircian sense, and towards a more democratic community of open inquiry.

However, as I’ve explored, Peirce was adamant that philosophy not be subjugated to socio-political concerns. No doubt, in part, stemming from his lifelong struggle against a puritanical academia and government oversight stifling his innovations in logic and science, Peirce was critical of any form of what Horkheimer would call “instrumentalism,” the deployment of human rational capacities to the sole goal ascertaining the *means* to arrive at *goals* prescribed external to the inquirer him or herself, goals prescribed, instead, by some sort of authority (be it state, church, or capital). Horkheimer, as I’ll explore later, actually accused Peirce of *advocating* instrumentalism but it appears to me patently clear that the opposite is the case. To have goals set prior to inquiry narrows the channels of potential inquiry (which ought to be as wide and varied as the human imagination itself), channels that necessarily feed into the

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<sup>655</sup> Iris Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 24 – 25.

basin of “truths,” beliefs, and values imposed upon individuals, effectively alienating them from the process of inquiry itself. This was patently clear in Peirce’s critique of the method of authority and *any* authority, no matter how benevolent or *apparently* benevolent, falls prey to this form of instrumentalism, namely, that inquiry is encouraged to be nothing but reifying and apologetic of a status quo not of their own making.

Nevertheless, “Fixation,” as we’ve seen, deals not only with how an *individual* inquirer forms his or her beliefs, but how a *community*, in total, grows and develops, concerned, as it is, with “the structure and health of the polis.”<sup>656</sup> In this sense it is undoubtedly a work of socio-political philosophy. As Anderson notes, “in asking how a community should govern the processes and contexts of fixing its beliefs, we ask not only about a specific kind of political action, but also about how we might envision the constituency of a healthy community.”<sup>657</sup> But in advocating the method of inquiry and, specifically, rejecting the method of authority as a viable method of knowledge acquisition, it was *Truth*, not the good of the community, that was Peirce’s ultimate goal. Resisting the impulse to subordinate philosophy to socio-political goals, Peirce went so far as to say:

To declare that the sole reason for scientific research is the good of society is to encourage those pseudo-scientists to claim, and the general public to admit, that they, who deal with the applications of knowledge, are the true men of science, and that the theoreticians are little better than idlers.<sup>658</sup>

And although Peirce was adamantly opposed to the injection of capitalistic motivations into the method of inquiry, noting that “the worst feature of the present state of things is that the great majority of the members of many scientific societies, and a large part of

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<sup>656</sup> Anderson, “A Political Dimension of Fixing Belief,” *Op. Cit.*, 224.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>658</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.142

others, are men whose chief interest in science is as a means of gaining money, and who have a contempt, or half-contempt, for pure science,”<sup>659</sup> his central concern was the subordination of science (and the scientific method) to the interests of society, in general:

Truth is truth, whether it is opposed to the interests of society to admit it or not -- and that the notion that we must deny what it is not conducive to the stability of British society to affirm is the mainspring of the mendacity and hypocrisy which Englishmen so commonly regard as virtues. I must confess that I belong to that class of scallawags who purpose, with God's help, to look the truth in the face, whether doing so be conducive to the interests of society or not.<sup>660</sup>

Ultimately, “the road to truth need not always follow what were perceived to be the immediate needs of any given society,”<sup>661</sup> for two reasons we have already discussed at length: (a) the long run theory of truth cannot be limited to the “immediate” needs of a community and (b) the ideal community is, itself, unlimited, and not a specific community in time and place. The ongoing quest for Truth supercedes a specific community in a specific time, and thus should not (*must* not) be subordinated to immediate socio-political concerns.

Although, for Peirce, the aims of philosophy and the good of the community were independent goals, and though they *might* prove mutually exclusive, they need not *necessarily* prove so. Those aspects of the counterproductive methods of belief formation that hinder the philosophical quest for Truth quite often hinder socio-political concerns for equality and democracy, as well. There is no clearer example of this than Peirce’s critique of the method of authority, as we’ve seen. Although Peirce claimed there are positive aspects to this method, and that it’s a method quite historically efficient in that

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<sup>659</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>660</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 8.143.

<sup>661</sup> Anderson, “A Political Dimension of Fixing Belief,” *Op. Cit.*, 227.

“except the geological epochs, there are no periods of time so vast as those which are measured by some of these organized faiths,”<sup>662</sup> individuals are, and remain, little more than “intellectual slaves”<sup>663</sup> under such a system of authority. As Anderson notes, Peirce, despite being the more conservative and traditionalist of the pragmatists, shared with Dewey and others the “common belief that philosophy-science, whatever its aim, needs to be relatively free from traditional forms of authority in order to carry out its work.”<sup>664</sup> That, “whether one wants to articulate an evolutionary cosmology or make a critical assessment of particular social institutions, there is no way to be effective if authorities such as churches or political parties stand in the way and manipulate one’s failure.”<sup>665</sup> Those whose goal is the flourishing of a community in a non-totalitarian state likewise champion such democratic values.

As Anderson suggests, “the best political community, in [Peirce’s] eyes, is a democratic republic that keeps the possibility of this deeper liberalism most alive.”<sup>666</sup> In adhering to his fallibilism, Peirce rejected dogmatism in all its forms, be it philosophical or political. In adhering to his first rule of reason, Peirce demanded a radical form of socio-political freedom *to inquire*. And in critiquing the method of authority, and advocating those individuals with wider social feeling, Peirce nascently constructed a proto-critical theory that, as I will now explore, resonated profoundly with Herbert Marcuse’s own critique of what he called “one-dimensional society” which reflected almost all of Peirce’s insights into the mechanisms of indoctrination and alienation within the method of authority.

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<sup>662</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.380

<sup>663</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>664</sup> Anderson, “A Political Dimension to Fixing Belief,” *Op. Cit.*, 229.

<sup>665</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>666</sup> Anderson, “A Political Dimension of Fixing Belief,” *Op. Cit.*, 232.

## Chapter 6

### Technics and Technology

Eleven years after Peirce published “The Fixation of Belief,” half a world away, Herbert Marcuse was born.<sup>667</sup> Upon completion of his studies at the Gymnasium, and a brief stint in the military, Marcuse went on to study at the universities of Berlin and Freiburg from 1919 until 1922. From those early years, Marcuse revealed interests as vast and boundless as Peirce’s own, focusing not only on philosophy, but on literature and economics, as well. After the completion of his dissertation,<sup>668</sup> and a brief stint in publishing, Marcuse returned to Freiburg where he worked with two of the greatest German thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl. It was here that his appreciation for Hegelian and post-Hegelian phenomenology was born.<sup>669</sup>

Marcuse’s first book not only reflected a fervent Heideggerian influence<sup>670</sup> on “Hegel’s less systematic and more historical strains,”<sup>671</sup> but, moreover, “evinced one of Marcuse’s greatest talents – his synthetic, speculative imagination, his ability to bring together the insights of many thinkers and traditions in startlingly new ways.”<sup>672</sup> Just as

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<sup>667</sup> Marcuse was born in Berlin, 1898, into a relatively affluent Jewish household.

<sup>668</sup> His dissertation focused on the German “Kunstslerroman,” or “Artist Novel.”

<sup>669</sup> Marcuse published his first book in 1932 entitled *Habilitationsschrift, Hegel’s Ontology and the Foundation of a Theory of Historicity*.

<sup>670</sup> It should be noted that, despite Heidegger’s influence on Marcuse’s reading of Hegel, “the Marxist orientation evident in his early articles meant that he was moving away from Heidegger, who tended more toward the right,” Alain Martineau, *Herbert Marcuse’s Utopia* (Montreal: Harvent House, 1986), 10.

<sup>671</sup> Robert Pippin, Andrew Feenberg, Charles P. Webel, & Contributors, *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1988), ix.

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid.*

Peirce was able to draw from his vast knowledge of the history of philosophy, weaving in an out of Kant, Hegel, Scotus and countless others to create something wholly new, so, too, did Marcuse draw on his unique exposure to various strains of socio-political thought, history, literature, art and the phenomenology of his mentors, to weave together something truly groundbreaking.

Not long after the publication of this first text, helped in no small part by a commendation on its scope and rigor by none other than Theodor Adorno himself, Marcuse became a member of the Institute for Social Research, a diverse array of socio-political philosophers including the likes of Max Horkheimer, Leo Lowenthal, Friedrich Pollock, Erich Fromm, Franz Neumann and, of course, Adorno, himself. The members of this Frankfurt School were proponents of what they called “critical theory,” “the theoretical position...which sought to revise Marxist social theory while remaining, according to their way of thinking, faithful to the Marxist spirit.”<sup>673</sup> Marcuse’s own definition of critical theory can be found scattered throughout his early work but is perhaps most succinctly formulated in his most iconic text, *One-Dimensional Man*:

Any critical theory of society is thus confronted with the problem of historical objectivity, a problem which arises at the two points where the analysis implies value judgments: (1) the judgment human life is worth living, or rather can be and ought to be made worth living. This judgment underlies all intellectual effort; it is the *a priori* of social theory, and its rejection...rejects theory itself; (2) the judgment that, in a given society, specific possibilities exist for the amelioration of human life and specific ways and means of realizing these possibilities.<sup>674</sup>

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<sup>673</sup> Martineau, *Herbert Marcuse’s Utopia*, *Op. Cit.*, 13. However, as Martineau goes on to rightly note, the defining characteristics of “critical theory” varied from member to member of the Frankfurt School: “interpretations of this position varied so widely, however, that the principal figures of the school...gave it very different theoretical and practical meaning,” *Ibid*.

<sup>674</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), xli – xlii.

These defining characteristics will recur throughout his work and form the bedrock of his critical endeavors.

Just as Peirce had done in the company of his “Metaphysical Club,” Marcuse’s thought flourished in the company of the Frankfurt School and he began to develop “his own highly original interpretation, synthesis, and critique of phenomenology, Hegel, Marx, and the Freudian psychoanalytic theory.”<sup>675</sup> These initial strains of thought and philosophical interests would find their way into the very heart of some of his most enduring texts, not the least of which were *One-Dimensional Man* and *Eros and Civilization*, the focal points for my investigation here.

Marcuse’s greatest achievement during this early period with the Frankfurt School was *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*<sup>676</sup> that sought to unearth radical strains in what most critics of Hegel maintained was a thoroughly conservative shell. Beneath this shell, “Marcuse discovered a radical kernel – the dialectical theory of negativity – and spent the rest of his life making use of this approach in an attempt to analyze and criticize existing ideologies and social institutions.”<sup>677</sup> As Bronner notes, Marcuse felt that “progress,” for Hegel, “always implied an ability to shape the world in terms of its unrealized potentiality for freedom.”<sup>678</sup> As Robinson notes, “Marcuse supported this thesis by pointing to Hegel’s distinction between reality and actuality, the former representing what in fact exists, the latter a reality which has overcome the discrepancy between the possible and the existent.”<sup>679</sup> This theory of

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<sup>675</sup> Pippin et al., *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*, *Op. Cit.*, x.

<sup>676</sup> Published in 1941.

<sup>677</sup> Pippin et al., *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*, *Op. Cit.*, x.

<sup>678</sup> Stephen Eric Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 237.

<sup>679</sup> Paul A. Robinson, *The Freudian Left* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1969), 157.



“negativity,” so prominent throughout the course of Marcuse’s long career, will be explored thoroughly throughout this investigation, as well as themes of “contradiction and the relation of theory to practice – motifs central to Frankfurt School critical theory,”<sup>680</sup> all of which were explored in that early text.

As an anti-totalitarian author, and a Jew, Marcuse’s best recourse was to flee Germany during the Nazi rise to power and he found a home in the United States, first working for the Office of Strategic Services,<sup>681</sup> then teaching at Columbia University, Harvard University and Brandeis until his quasi-retirement in 1965. Towards the end of his tenure at Brandeis, the University of California San Diego took interest in his work and invited him to teach there for a series of short contracts until 1970. Due to the stellar success and popularity of *One-Dimensional Man*<sup>682</sup> and *Eros and Civilization*,<sup>683</sup> in conjunction with his very public anti-war efforts, Marcuse became known to a new generation of critical theorists as the acknowledged “Father of the New Left.”

Passing away at the age of 81 in 1979, Marcuse was exposed to such “epochal events as World War I, the Russian Revolution, fascism, exile, World War II, the civil rights, anti-war, and student movements, Watergate, and the nuclear arms race.”<sup>684</sup> At one point or another in his career, Marcuse responded to, or was influenced by, each and every major historical event of the better part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and bringing to bear his vast array of philosophical interests, from Marx to Freud, from Hegel to Heidegger, just as it was in Peirce, the difficulty arose as to whether or not it was possible to construct a

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<sup>680</sup> Douglas Kellner, introduction to *Collected Papers*, vol. 1, *Technology, War and Fascism*, by Herbert Marcuse (New York: Routledge, 1998), 4.

<sup>681</sup> From 1942 – 1950.

<sup>682</sup> Published in 1964.

<sup>683</sup> Published in 1955.

<sup>684</sup> Pippin et al., *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*, *Op. Cit.*, xi.

systematic overview of his work. As Pippin and others have noted, “as the preceding sketch makes clear, any attempt to compile and organize a comprehensive series of essays on the thought of Herbert Marcuse immediately encounters an obvious and difficult problem,”<sup>685</sup> namely, that “the range of his interests throughout his long life was so wide that, at first glance, it seems to defeat any attempt at a view of the whole.”<sup>686</sup> A nearly identical problem presented itself to us in our analysis of Peirce and, just as with Peirce, this project will endeavor to unearth a unifying strain of thought throughout Marcuse’s multifaceted explorations as not only pivotal to his own position but, too, capable of being brought into direct conversation with the insights of Peirce. For as Pippin and others note, “in the face of this gallimaufry of concerns, it is important not to lose sight of the unity Marcuse himself would have insisted upon, a unity necessary to keep in mind when understanding and assessing his work.”<sup>687</sup>

Of key interest to this particular project are the socio-political ramifications of Peirce’s various positions, most notably the detrimental ways in which various counterproductive forms of belief formation have negatively impacted cultural and individual development. Peirce provided his own immanent critique of each of the three counterproductive methods, demonstrating ways in which, unlike the method of inquiry, these three do not hold in the “long run.” One of the most enduring methods, by Peirce’s own admission, was the method of authority wherein a power structure, through various means of historical revisionism, cultural isolationism, censorship, and the proliferation of propaganda, dictates the cultural beliefs *for* a given populace rather than allow them to engage in the prescribed method of inquiry. These beliefs, invariably, are to the benefit of

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<sup>685</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>686</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid.*

the power elite, aiding them in retaining their hold on power by eliminating viable alternatives and convincing their populace of the timeless, apodictic necessity of the beliefs they proliferate. In 1972, Marcuse released his own *Study of Authority* wherein he explored many of the same themes inherent in Peirce's own critique, though in far more depth and historical scope than Peirce, in such a limited space, was able to articulate.

Moreover, the form of the authoritarian power in Peirce, as well as the means of its perpetuation of power and belief manipulation, resonate throughout the various periods of Marcuse's long career. Note Marcuse's language, for example, in his *Essay on Liberation*, reflecting many of the same themes he developed earlier in *One-Dimensional Man*:

The mass democracy developed by monopoly capitalism has shaped the rights and liberties which it grants in its own image and interest; the majority of the people is the majority of their masters; deviations are easily 'contained'; and concentrated power can afford to tolerate (perhaps even defend) radical dissent as long as the latter complies with the established rules and manners...the opposition is thus sucked into the very world which it opposes.<sup>688</sup>

The authority, which here takes the form of democracy under the sway of monopoly capitalism, grants rights and liberties to its citizens only in so far as they reinforce the authority's *own* "image and interest." Further, just as we saw in Peirce's exploration of the ways in which dissenters are handled by the authority, "deviations," as Marcuse notes here, are "easily 'contained.'" Lastly, as with Peirce, the authority was unable to manage *all* of the beliefs of its citizens, but, in fact, did not *need* to, so long as the more critical beliefs, those which keep the authority in power, were secured. Here, as well, Marcuse notes that the authority may allow a certain form of dissent, *just enough* dissent along

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<sup>688</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 64.

with *just enough* rights and liberties, to obfuscate the efficacy of their hold on power by appearing to grant avenues of dissent and the rights and liberties to engage in dissent, negating the possibility of any *radical* dissent to change the authoritarian system on a more fundamental level.<sup>689</sup> Those individuals that attempt to undermine the most fundamental beliefs proliferated by the authority, that engage in this unacceptable *radical* form of dissent, are labeled as “criminal” or “Enemy,” as Marcuse notes. In this way, even language is mobilized in the authority’s “counterrevolutionary” efforts:

In the established vocabulary, ‘violence’ is a term which one does not apply to the action of the police, the National Guard, the Marshals, the Marines, the bombers. The ‘bad’ words are a priori reserved for the Enemy, and their meaning is defined and validated by the actions of the Enemy regardless of their motivation and goal.<sup>690</sup>

The “Enemy,” here, refers to those who would undermine the authority’s hold on power, akin to Peirce’s individual of “wider social feeling.” The term, “Enemy,” mobilized by the authority, is used to describe in a blanketing way all those who would undermine the established law and order of society, regardless, as he says, “of their motivation and goal,” lumping wanton criminality in with those that would see a better, freer society. Look no further than the criminalizing of the activities of those involved in the Civil Rights movement as an example of this phenomenon, those who fought for equality equated with wanton criminals. The authority guards against individuals with this “wider social feeling,” those capable of bringing about radical social change and engaging in radical dissent, by labeling them “Enemy” and thus convincing their own populace to

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<sup>689</sup> “As long as the social system reproduces, by indoctrination and integration, a self-perpetuating conservative majority, the majority reproduces the system itself – open to changes within, but not beyond, its institutional framework,” *Ibid.*, 69 – 70.

<sup>690</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

turn against their neighbors in support of their prescribed way of life: a self-policing, self-regulating policy that Peirce explicitly warned against.

Consequently, the struggle for changes beyond the system becomes, by virtue of its own dynamic, undemocratic in the terms of the system, and counterviolence is from the beginning inherent in this dynamic. Thus the radical is guilty – either of surrendering to the power of the *status quo*, or of violating the Law and Order of the *status quo*.<sup>691</sup>

The “radical,” for Peirce, the individual of “wider social feeling,” is guilty no matter what: either this individual surrenders to the indoctrinating *status quo* of the system or else, precisely because this individual’s transgressions are a *radical* form of dissent, and not the inconsequential forms that the authority permits, are guilty of criminality, of violating this *status quo*.

In the mobilization of this aggressiveness, ancient psychical forces are activated to serve the economic-political needs of the system: the Enemy are those who are unclear, infested; they are animals rather than humans; they are contagious...and threaten the clean, anesthetized, healthy free world. They must be liquidated, smoked out, and burned out like venom.<sup>692</sup>

Marcuse’s language eloquently resonated with Peirce’s own in his critique of the method of authority; the means by which the authority seeks to criminalize, marginalize and condemn as contagions all those with this wider sort of social feeling.

Yet, for Peirce, despite the historic efficacy of the method of authority, despite the centuries of domination it has borne, it cannot hold “in the long run.” Eventually, those with a wider sense of social feeling will seek abroad, or to the past, or some potential avenue for the fruitful comparison to stimulate the doubt requisite for the unfolding of inquiry and radical social change. Marcuse called this phenomenon “sublimation,” the

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<sup>691</sup> *Ibid.*, 69 – 70.

<sup>692</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

transcendence *beyond* the established universe of beliefs perpetuated by the authority, achieved through what Marcuse called the reengagement of “critical” or “negative” thinking, leading to a “Great Refusal,” the rejection of *what is* from the higher perspective of *what might otherwise be*. These were the tools of Peirce’s individual of wider social feeling. So, too, was it the basis of *both* philosophers’ attack on “positive” thinking or “positivism,” especially that of Auguste Comte and others of his ilk who marginalized negative thinking (the doubt, tension and comparison between possibilities forged of dialogue and inquiry) in favor of a study of the bare facts of *what is*, relegating the philosophy of *what ought to be* or *what is not* to idle speculation; a “speculation” that is anything *but* “idle” and is precisely what is needed for radical social change to manifest. Positivism divorced from negative thinking is nothing more than an analysis of *what is* and, so being, is little more than reaffirmation of the authoritarian structures already in place, “apologetic,” “justificatory,”<sup>693</sup> and nothing more.

“Critical” or “negative thinking” was requisite for progress towards a better society in both Marcuse and Peirce, though the language is Marcuse’s alone. For Peirce it was the language of “belief” and of “doubt;” the beliefs formed and proliferated by the authority and the doubt that the authority would not permit its citizens to experience that would otherwise propel inquiry and instigate radical social change.

Marcuse was profoundly optimistic throughout much of his career as to the very real potential for radical social change even from the seemingly totalizing, self-insulating, self-perpetuating structures of authority. Indeed, Marcuse even made direct reference to a “long run” in his later work, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*:

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<sup>693</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 341.

A Marxian analysis cannot seek comfort ‘in the long run.’ In this ‘long run,’ the system will indeed collapse, but Marxian theory cannot prophesy which form of society (if any) will replace it. Within the framework of the objective conditions, the alternatives (fascism or socialism) depend on the intelligence and the will, the consciousness and the sensibility, of human beings. It depends on their still-existing *freedom*.<sup>694</sup>

Marcuse was convinced that the technological apparatus of capital would, indeed, collapse given enough time, that is, “in the long run,” but warned against an acquiescent acceptance of this distant historical moment. Peirce, too, would agree, especially in terms of the necessity for the “still-existing *freedom*,” the “intelligence,” and the “will,” of those in the community of inquirers to buck trends towards conformity. Nevertheless, Marcuse was well aware of the time-consuming prospects of realizing radical social change, noting in various places throughout his work that there was a “long march”<sup>695</sup> ahead of us towards an ideal future society. As Bronner notes, “Utopia...thus becomes a legitimate object of inquiry”<sup>696</sup> and, as such, in a Peircean sense, may guide us into the future.

Further, Marcuse presented the authority’s ability to obfuscate Truth, blockade individual inquiry towards it, and replace Truth with whatever was conducive to the perpetuation of its hold on power, in a manner quite complementary to the way in which Peirce described these phenomena. For example, Marcuse noted in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, that we seek an “idea” purified from the “mutilated experience which is the

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<sup>694</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 29.

<sup>695</sup> “To extend the base of the student movement, Rudi Dutschke has proposed the strategy of the *long march through the institutions*: working against the established institutions while working in them, but not simply by ‘boring from within,’ rather by ‘doing the job,’ learning (how to program and read computers, how to teach at all levels of education, how to use the mass media, how to organize production, how to recognize and eschew planned obsolescence, how to design, et cetera), and at the same time preserving one’s own consciousness in working with others. The long march includes the concerted effort to built up counterinstitutions,” *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>696</sup> Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, *Op. Cit.*, 240.

work of society” wherein it is “given” in a “false” and “distorted” form.<sup>697</sup> This is the job of “negative” thinking which “negates”<sup>698</sup> the false, distorted and manipulated beliefs perpetuated by the apparatus of capital, revealing them for what they are and thus freeing the inquiring mind to seek Truth through means other than reliance on authority. I would argue that Peirce’s individual of wider social feeling, those that see the structures of authority for what they *are* by comparing them to *what they are not*, was engaged in *precisely* this form of negative thinking that Marcuse described here.

For Marcuse, the necessary component of such truth-seeking was radical individual freedom: freedom from the totalizing system of indoctrination forged of capital and, in essence, freedom from what Max Weber called “technological rationality” which provides its own forms of “truth” and “values.” Technological rationality, in this sense, creates the kind of rational instrumentalism that Peirce railed against in his critique of the method of authority: beliefs and values prescribed externally to the inquirer him or herself that all inquiry must be channeled to reify and validate *a priori*. Like Peirce, Marcuse saw freedom itself as a “regulative concept,” freedom to inquire without blockade or constraint, which guides “the practice of changing reality in accordance with its ‘idea,’ i.e., its own potentialities – to make reality free for its truth.”<sup>699</sup> “Reality has to be discovered and projected,”<sup>700</sup> Marcuse said, “projected” in so far as it is postulated as existing *beyond* or *behind* the stultifying confines of capital’s discourse and commodity

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<sup>697</sup> Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *Op. Cit.*, 70.

<sup>698</sup> Negative thinking presents ideas as “the *horizon* of experience under which the immediately given forms of things appear as ‘negative,’ as denial of their inherent possibilities, their truth,” *Ibid*.

<sup>699</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>700</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 39.



fetishism, and thus “discovered” via negative thinking, that which *is not* the ideology of exploitation and toil.<sup>701</sup> As Marcuse noted:

Knowledge is transcendent (toward the object world, toward reality) not only in an epistemological sense – as against repressive forms of life – it is political. Denial of the right to political activity in the university perpetuates the separation between theoretical and practical reason and reduces the effectiveness and the scope of intelligence.<sup>702</sup>

Whether it was the denial of the right to engage in political activity or the denial of the right to inquire any which way the individual saw fit, the scope of intelligence is narrowed to the closed confines of the instrumental avenues dictated by the authority. Knowledge seeks to discover the Truth, a realm “transcendent” beyond the beliefs proliferated by these invested interests, a reality once embraced that illuminates the contingency of the beliefs and values proliferated and would reinstate non-instrumental inquiry once more.

Marcuse, on occasion, even framed the relationship between the individual and society in a manner akin to Peirce’s “organic” relationship between organism and environment and the stimuli that the organism reacts *to* which subsequently condition the habits and beliefs forged of those transactions. As Marcuse said in *An Essay on Liberation*, for example:

Once a specific morality is firmly established as a norm of social behavior, it is not only introjected – it also operates as a norm of ‘organic’ behavior: the organism receives and reacts to stimuli and ‘ignores’ or repels others in accord with the introjected morality, which is thus promoting or impeding the function of the organism as a living cell in the respective society.<sup>703</sup>

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<sup>701</sup> “The senses must learn not to see things anymore in the medium of that law and order which has formed them; the bad functionalism which organizes our sensibility must be smashed.” *Ibid.*

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*, 62. The emphasis here on the “university,” for Marcuse, was microcosmic of far wider economic concerns throughout the advanced industrial society as a whole.

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

As Peirce noted, the cycle of belief formation is stimulated by the onset of specific problematic situations that threw the initial belief into a state of doubt that, in turn, became the genesis of inquiry. The problems that an individual encounters are substantially altered depending upon both that individual's surrounding natural and social environment as well as the method of belief formation he or she maintains. Key to Marcuse's point here, the individuals within a system of authority will likewise be stimulated by a very unique problem set conditioned *by* the authority itself. As such, the beliefs forged of inquiry, the doubt that stimulates inquiry, are all traced back to the preconditioned problems that an individual faces such that the trajectory of the cycle of inquiry terminates in precisely those beliefs that are conducive to the authority's hold on power.

Further, "it is precisely this excessive adaptability of the human organism which propels the perpetuation and extension of the commodity form and, with it, the perpetuation and extension of the social controls over behavior and satisfaction."<sup>704</sup> Peirce's naturalistic conception of the inquirer as "organism" adapting to problematic situations is the basis for indoctrination within the method of authority and central to Marcuse's entire critical project. Within the one-dimensional society, the human organism adapts to the changing climate's increase in commodity fetishism, increase in standard of living, the capitalistic drive to succeed at the expense of others (the defining characteristic of the "Gospel of Greed" for Peirce), and thus the successfully adaptive organism within such a society is the best sort of cog in the machine of technological

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<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

rationality and industry. Adaptation *becomes* assimilation in the advanced industrial society.

Indeed, Marcuse even referenced the manipulation of beliefs, explicitly, as part of the indoctrinating function of the bureaucratic apparatus of authority: “a society also demands to a considerable extent belief in one’s beliefs (which is part of the required sanity); belief in the operative value of society’s values.”<sup>705</sup> The adaptive organism within the advanced industrial society acquiesces to the values and beliefs of the authority, just as Peirce noted in his own critique. Indeed, as we will explore shortly, this is the key corrective that Marcuse contributes to Marx’s social theory: a social psychology of the working class within such an advanced industrial authoritarian system that adapts the values and beliefs of commodity and capital to survive, placated by just enough euphoric indulgences that the motivation for genuine revolutionary change is negated.

Marcuse even expressed the distinction between authentic and inauthentic forms of solidarity and social individualism. As Peirce noted, there is solidarity and social individualism in *both* the ideal community of inquirers as well as the citizens in an authoritarian state. The former championed authentic democratic ideals of dialogue, belief revision, and communal inquiry. The latter, by contrast, was merely a legion of “intellectual slaves,” somnambulists, all working together, yes, but not for the sake of Truth, knowledge or freedom, but merely for the perpetuation of the authority that governs them:

These new relationships would be the result of a ‘biological’ *solidarity* in work and purpose, expressive of a true harmony between social and individual needs and goals, between recognized necessity and free

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<sup>705</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

development – the exact opposite of the administered and enforced harmony organized in the advanced capitalist (and socialist?) countries...solidarity and cooperation: not all their forms are liberating. Fascism and militarism have developed a deadly efficient solidarity. Socialist solidarity is autonomy: self-determination begins at home – and that is with every I, and the We whom the I chooses.<sup>706</sup>

Just as Peirce noted, the defining distinction between the solidarity and social individualism of the community of inquiry and the community of authority is one of autonomy and non-instrumental rationality (the freedom to self-govern and dictate for themselves the trajectory of inquiry) vs. heteronomy and instrumental rationality (the passive acceptance of beliefs pre-packaged to the benefit of the governing power).

Despite the Frankfurt School's general aversion to capitalism, Marcuse had great hope for America, calling it the *only* "land of the future."<sup>707</sup> Nevertheless, Marcuse saw a subtle form of totalitarianism manifest in America's so-called democracy, a form of totalitarianism based not upon force and coercion, but upon the perpetuation of beliefs, values and desires conducive only to those in power under the sway of market capitalism. And the foundation of all this, Marcuse maintained, was the indoctrinating and alienating uses of an increasingly wide proliferation of technology:

By virtue of the way it has organized its technological base, contemporary industrial society tends to be totalitarian. For 'totalitarian' is not only a terroristic political coordination of society, but also a nonterroristic economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests.<sup>708</sup>

Marcuse saw, in the very substructure of capitalism in advanced industrial societies, the creation and manipulation of needs and desires (and, consequently, the very ways in

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<sup>706</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>707</sup> Herbert Marcuse, "Preface to the Original Edition," in *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941), xv.

<sup>708</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 3.

which human beings develop) that invariably benefit those “vested interests” in places of socio-political or economic seats of power and technology is the engine for the promulgation of this indoctrination.

Technology plays a key role in the type of instrumentalism that Peirce highlighted in his critique of the method of authority, illuminated throughout Marcuse’s career. If instrumentalism, in this specific sense, is defined as the mobilization of human cognitive capacities to ascertain the means to externally prescribed ends, creating rigid channels through which inquiry must conform, technology was, for Marcuse, a prime contributor to this phenomenon. Rather than diminishing scarcity, sickness, and suffering, technology has created new avenues of control, conditioning the ways in which we may inquire and dictating the goals of that inquiry for the inquirers themselves. However, several decades prior to *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse held a more dynamic and dialectical conception of technology, seeing it as not *only* a means of indoctrination but, too, a potential source for the most profound emancipation from precisely the sorts of structures an advanced society maintains.<sup>709</sup>

This dynamic position is most succinctly encapsulated in his 1941 paper “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” published in the Institute’s *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*. That early essay serves as an illuminating precursor to the critique that would come later in *One-Dimensional Man*,<sup>710</sup> demonstrating the connections between “technology and potent forms of cultural domination”<sup>711</sup> and

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<sup>709</sup> A position he would only return to later in his career, especially *An Essay on Liberation* (1969).

<sup>710</sup> “An extremely significant 1941 article, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” published in English in the Institute’s journal, contains Marcuse’s first sketch of the role of technology in modern industrial societies and anticipates his later analysis in *One-Dimensional Man*,” Kellner in Marcuse, *Collected Papers*, vol. 1, *Technology, War and Fascism*, *Op. Cit.*, 4.

<sup>711</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

offering a penetrating critique of “technology and analyses of the ways that modern technology is producing novel forms of society and culture with new modes of social control.”<sup>712</sup> Technology, as we will see, aids the administration in dissolving the potential for “negative thinking” which, for Marcuse, is central to even the possibility of radical social change and the dissolution of the indoctrinating and alienating tendencies of the technology, itself.<sup>713</sup>

In this early essay, Marcuse marked a distinction between “technology” “taken as a social process”<sup>714</sup> with “technics,” “the technical apparatus of industry, transportation, communication.”<sup>715</sup> Although technology as a *social* process has, for Marcuse, taken on a decidedly negative connotation, associated with modes of control and domination, *technics* is a far more neutral entity maintaining the potential both for the perpetration of authoritarian dominion *as well as* the potential for becoming an engine of liberation.

Technology, as a mode of production, as the totality of instruments, devices and contrivances which characterize the machine age is thus at the same time a mode of organizing and perpetuating (or changing) social relationships, a manifestation of prevalent thought and behavior patterns, an instrument for control and domination.<sup>716</sup>

Characteristic of the “machine age,” what Marcuse will refer to as the “advanced industrial society” throughout *One-Dimensional Man*, technology “as a mode of production” is the instrument for “control and domination” and the leading factor in social arrangements to the point of influencing individuals down to their very thoughts

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<sup>712</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>713</sup> For Marcuse, technology is intimately interwoven with his own conception of individualism and the potential for human autonomy. In this early essay, “Marcuse delineates the historical decline of individualism from the time of the bourgeois revolutions to the rise of the modern technological society,” *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>714</sup> Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” *Collected Papers*, vol. 1, *Op. Cit.*, 41.

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid.*

and behavior patterns, by what he will eventually refer to in that later book as the vested interests', that is, the "administrative-bureaucratic apparatus which organizes, manages, and stabilizes capitalist society,"<sup>717</sup> ability to utilize the advanced forms of technology and its proliferation to "invade" the individual's "private space" until it is "whittled down by technological reality."<sup>718</sup>

Conversely, "technics by itself can promote authoritarianism as well as liberty, scarcity as well as abundance, the extension as well as the abolition of toil."<sup>719</sup> The initial rise of the technological age offered such potential for liberation. Whereas individuals might spend all day toiling to create a certain set number of goods, technology could, theoretically, permit those individuals to create *more* products over *less* time utilizing *less* toil. The proliferation of products could then (theoretically) aid in the alleviation of scarcity rather than its perpetuation. The reality, however, proved to be quite different. For although Marcuse's "critical theory of technics/technology" does well to differentiate "negative features with positive potentials that could be used to democratize and enhance human life,"<sup>720</sup> the emphasis is clearly on the former, the ways in which technology has indoctrinated and manipulated citizens of advanced industrial societies. The integration of technology into the factory did nothing to alleviate toil or time, merely allowing more products to be created for increased profits for the owners of this technology.

Indeed, technology has its own form of instrumentalism separate from that of the instrumentalism of human rationality. Technological instrumentalism is the utilization of

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<sup>717</sup> This is Douglas Kellner in his introduction to the second edition of *One-Dimensional Man* paraphrasing Rudolf Hilferding's *Finance Capital* (1910; repr., London: Routledge, 1981).

<sup>718</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 10.

<sup>719</sup> Herbert Marcuse, "Social Implications of Modern Technology," in *Collected Papers*, vol. 1, *Technology, War and Fascism*, *Op. Cit.*, 41.

<sup>720</sup> Kellner in *Collected Papers*, vol. 1, *Technology, War and Fascism*, *Op. Cit.*, 7.

technology as a *means* to ends *we* prescribe, that is to say, technology is “neutral: as a transparent medium, it adds nothing substantive to the activities it serves but merely accelerates those activities, or realizes them on a larger scale or under new conditions.”<sup>721</sup> For Marcuse, ideally, human rational capacities ought to be freed from the instrumental rigidity of the modern age and instrumentalism ought to be allocated to technology itself: we ought not to be the means to ends dictated by technology but, conversely, we ought to dictate the ends *for* technology which technology, in turn, instrumentally, ascertains the means to achieve the goals we demand of it. In the advanced industrial society, Marcuse argued, this revolution of Frankenstein’s monster, establishing its own autonomy over its creator, has created new forms of social control, indoctrination, and alienation as technology has lost this instrumental bent.

Technological instrumentalism, the view “that humanity was in control of its technologies,”<sup>722</sup> allows for its employment on “purely rational grounds, such as measurable, verifiable improvements in efficiency.”<sup>723</sup> Although Marcuse admitted to technics’ *potential* for either emancipation or indoctrination, by the time it takes the form of “technology,” in a Marcusean sense, a problem arises: technology *becomes* the new rationality. If rationality employs technology, but has likewise *become* technology (what Marcuse, taking a cue from Max Weber,<sup>724</sup> will call “technological rationality”<sup>725</sup>), then

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<sup>721</sup> Andrew Feenbun, “The Critique of Technology: From Dystopia to Interraction,” in *Marcuse: From the New Left to the Next Left*, ed. John Bokina and Timothy J. Lukes (Kansas City: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 211.

<sup>722</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>723</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>724</sup> “Reason, as seen by Max Weber, is revealed as technical reason: the production and transformation of materials (both things and people) by a methodical and scientific apparatus set up with productivity as its goal; its rationality organizes and controls things and people, the factory and civil service bureaucracy, work and leisure,” Herbert Marcuse, “Industrialisierung und Kapitalismus im Werk Max Webers,” in *Kultur und Gesellschaft II*, trans. Anne-Marie Feenberg (Frankfurt am Main, 1965), 110 – 111.



technology, in essence, comes to employ itself. It takes on a life of its own apart from humanity's employment of it. And this is a central concern for Marcuse's critical theory, for if "rationality has always been considered a basis for truly free association; when common goals emerge from debate and argument" (as Peirce would advocate) and wherein "people cooperate without coercion" (that is, not within a Peircean authority), that capacity for radical autonomous inquiry, in an authentically free and open community of inquirers, is negated by the conditions and employment of technology *by* technology, and "rationality" is transmuted into "efficiency," serving the ends of the technocratic rationality of the modernized age. Indeed, this "technological rationality" is the "culprit" of the "opiating tendencies of modern technological society," the central theme of *One-Dimensional Man*; a technological rationality which, as Lukes notes, "involves populace acceptance of the belief that the given technology, without any serious restructuring, can solve any problems with which it is confronted."<sup>726</sup> This passive receptivity by a populace of a fundamental belief (namely, the efficacy and emancipatory power of technology) is in keeping with a Peircean critique of authority in the ways in which I have discussed. The merger of technology and rationality in this Weberian sense creates a most atrocious sort of chimera: technology, which ought to be the means to achieve ends prescribed autonomously by human beings, is now the guiding force for what is considered rational to begin with and reason, which ought to be deployed for ascertaining the goals technology ought to have and then relegate

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<sup>725</sup> Feenburg suggests that Marcuse was influenced here by his reading of Max Weber who "defined modernity in terms of the spread of markets, formal law, democracy, beurocracy and technology. He called these 'rationalized' institutions because they share certain qualities normally associated with reason: they appear more abstract, more exact, more value- and context-free, better grounded in scientific knowledge, and more efficient than traditional institutions," *Ibid.*, *Op. Cit.*, 215.

<sup>726</sup> Timothy J. Lukes, *The Flight into Inwardness: An Exposition and Critique of Herbert Marcuse's Theory of Liberative Aesthetics* (Toronto: Susquehanna University Press, 1985), 17.

technology to finding the means to fulfill goals posed *by* humanity, is now reduced to finding the means to the goals set by technology itself.

Marcuse, however, was not wholly consistent on this distinction, as Ingram notes, for although he “sometimes suggests that only political ends would be transformed while technology, conceived as a neutral instrument for efficiently realizing ends, would remain the same”<sup>727</sup>...elsewhere<sup>728</sup> he says that the very structure of science and technology would be transformed.”<sup>729</sup> Only the former view retains technology in its instrumental form. In either case, however, Marcuse *was* consistent on his call for a fundamental change in the uses of technology and the eradication of this technological rationality. For in the advanced, one-dimensional society, technology, as Farr notes, “perpetuates the erasure of the individual” and “is viewed as a panacea which stands above the values of individuals in society. Technology...becomes the ultimate value.”<sup>730</sup> As such, the only path to liberation from the stultifying effects of technical rationality was, as Marcuse noted, “only by a revolution which makes technology and technique subservient to the needs and goals of free men: in this sense, and in this sense only, it would be a revolution against technocracy.”<sup>731</sup>

Technological rationality infiltrates *every* facet of modern life, even the ways in which we take our leisure. It is so all-pervasive that, as Marcuse will offer later in his

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<sup>727</sup> “One may still insist that the machinery of the technological universe is ‘as such’ indifferent towards political ends – it can revolutionize or retard a society...as electronic computers can serve equally in capitalist or socialist administration; a cyclotron can be an equally efficient tool for a war party or a peace party ...,” Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 154.

<sup>728</sup> “Its hypotheses, without losing their rational character, would develop in an essentially different experimental context (that of a pacified world); consequently, science would arrive at essentially different concepts of nature and establish different facts,” *Ibid*, 166 – 167.

<sup>729</sup> David Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy* (Minnesota: Paragon House, 1990), 88.

<sup>730</sup> Arnold L. Farr, *Critical Theory and Democratic Vision: Herbert Marcuse and Recent Liberation Philosophies* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 93.

<sup>731</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 56.

career, it must be supplanted by a new, “aesthetic” rationality<sup>732</sup> if radical social change is to emerge as a live possibility, freeing creativity and the freeplay of the imagination to conceive alternative potentialities to the current status quo. In the interim, however, citizens are indoctrinated to the very core of their being, down to their very desires and needs, as is the predominant theme of both *One-Dimensional Man* as well as *Eros and Civilization*, in a totalizing system wherein escape seems impossible. As Offe notes, “the domain of culture is also industrialized; esthetic expressions are robbed of their critical function and circulate as mediators of affirmative contents of consciousness,”<sup>733</sup> that is, even the traditionally conceived autonomy and free play of imaginative ideas in the aesthetic realm are co-opted and utilized *by* the technical apparatus to perpetuate itself and the vested interests in positions of power.<sup>734</sup>

Using Weber’s definition, Marcuse came to distance himself from the traditional technological-instrumentalist view in noting the all-consuming nature of the technocracy both in terms of the *means* of societal development as well as the *ends* which, no longer prescribed the citizens themselves, come to be prescribed *by* the technology. He said, “in the face of the totalitarian features of this society, the traditional notion of the ‘neutrality’ of technology can no longer be maintained.”<sup>735</sup> As Offe notes, there was “no longer a purely ‘neutral’ potential” as instrumentalism would maintain but, rather, this new technological rationality “expands into the total structure of society; the dominant

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<sup>732</sup> “A break with the logic of progress can then only take place through renewed commitment to aesthetic form,” Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, *Op. Cit.*, 239.

<sup>733</sup> Claus Offe, “Technology and One-Dimensionality: A Version of the Technocracy Thesis?” trans. Anne-Marie Feenberg in *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*, *Op. Cit.*, 218.

<sup>734</sup> Marcuse will refer to this phenomenon as “artificial desublimation” in *One-Dimensional Man* which I’ll discuss in the following chapter.

<sup>735</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, xv.

technological system no longer possess the transparency it once derived from its definite orientation towards the interests of certain social classes or groups.”<sup>736</sup>

Thus negating the possibility that rationality could be in any way divorced from technology sufficiently to employ it, technology, in a sense, employs *itself* and the “ends” to which human rationality would otherwise utilize technology are now dictated *by* the technology itself. It has escaped the combined will of its creators and taken on a “life” of its own, a life that then turns to condition not only its *own* trajectory but also the lived conditions of its creators. As Feenburg notes:

Modern means already change the world ‘immanently,’ independent of the purpose for which they are employed. Our tools have become the environment in which we live; increasingly, we are incorporated into the apparatus that we have created, and we are subordinated to its rhythms and demands. Heidegger called this the ‘peril’ of the age.<sup>737</sup>

This conception of technology effectively taking on a life of its own, transcending the purposes of its human creators to then turn back to dictate the lived reality for all is foreshadowed by Marx and studied closely in Marcuse’s *Counterrevolution and Revolt*.

As Marx said:

No longer the individual laborer but rather the socially combined labor power becomes the actual agent of the collective work process. The various competing labor powers which constitute the productive machine as a whole participate in very different ways in the immediate production of commodities...one individual works with his hands, another with his head, one as a manager, engineer, technologist, et cetera...they are directly exploited by capital...[the combined activity of the collective laborer results] immediately in a collective product which is at the same time a sum-total of commodities, and it is a matter of indifference whether the

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<sup>736</sup> Offe, “Technology and One-Dimensionality: A Version of the Technocracy Thesis?” *Op. Cit.*, 216.

<sup>737</sup> Feenburg, “The Critique of Technology: From Dystopia to Interaction,” in *Marcuse: From the New Left to the Next Left*, *Op. Cit.*, 214.

function of the individual worker, who is only a member of this collective laborer, is more remote or close to immediate manual labor.<sup>738</sup>

Each participant in labor adds to the sum-total *praxes* that, itself, takes on a momentum of production all its own, beyond the control of any of the unique, individual laborers engaged in the process of manufacturing under the control of the machine-age. As Marcuse said, “the enlarged universe of exploitation is a totality of machines – human, economic, political, military, educational...the nation *as* capital, imperialist capital.”<sup>739</sup>

This Marxian concept of the totality of the machine age taking on, in effect, a life of its own, is beautifully expressed in the work of Jean-Paul Sartre. Like Marcuse, Sartre drew from his combined interest in Hegel, phenomenology and Marxism but infused his own unique brand of existentialism, culminating in his epic treatise, *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*. All too aware of technology’s oppressive role in modern society, Sartre argued that the combined practical activities, or “*praxes*,” of unique individuals are taken up in the miasma of what he termed “the practico-inert,” the sum-total of all *praxes* that is, itself, over and above all of them, taking on a life of its own, resisting change and relatively immune to alterations in its momentum. “Sartre...never doubted that the multiplicity of individual *praxes* produced the world,”<sup>740</sup> and the sum-total of these *praxes*, ““the practico-inert, however well worked, continues to manifest an ‘active inertia’ that resists human projects.”<sup>741</sup>

All individual freedoms are finally bogged down in what Sartre calls the ‘practico-inert,’ the thing-iness of the social organization, to which everyone is subject as if it were a form of physical necessity; it is a

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<sup>738</sup> Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *Op. Cit.*, 12 – 13 citing Karl Marx, *Resultate des unmittelbaren Produktionsprozesses* (earlier version of a 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Capital*) (Frankfurt: Neue Kritik, 1969), 65 f.

<sup>739</sup> Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *Op. Cit.*, 13.

<sup>740</sup> Ron Aronson. *Sartre’s Second Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 245.

<sup>741</sup> Gary Cox, *The Sartre Dictionary* (New York: Continuum Press, 2008), 54.

necessity which remains intelligible because it derives from the free *praxes* of individuals, but it is, in a way, a negation of that liberty.<sup>742</sup>

As Aronson notes, “[the practico-inert] entails the thesis that, regardless of its intended positive results, our *praxis* is thwarted or confounded. We become dominated by unintended features of our product.”<sup>743</sup> The practico-inert, in a very real sense, represents the transcendental conditions for all lived experience, the backdrop, frequently passing unnoticed and unquestioned, against which all lived experience must necessarily unfold. As Marcuse said, too:

As a technological universe, advanced industrial society is a *political* universe, the latest stage in the realization of a specific historical *project* – namely, the experience, transformation, and organization of nature as the mere stuff of domination. As the project unfolds, it shares the entire universe of discourse and action, intellectual and material culture. In the medium of technology, culture, politics, and the economy merge into an omnipresent system which swallows up or repulses all alternatives.<sup>744</sup>

Similar to Sartre’s position, Marcuse saw a political project (the sum total of all “*praxes*” as Sartre might say) taking on a life of its own, creating an “entire universe,” an “omnipresent system,” which in turn creates its own demands for its own perpetuation.

At first this may sound somewhat esoteric but, quite the contrary, there is nothing at all occult about such a phenomenon. If we consider the capitalistic market, for example, the consumer’s choices do, indeed, participate in the market’s overall trajectory. But that trajectory is the sum total of *all* consumer choices and beyond the direct manipulation of any single individual that participates in such a totalizing system. In turn, the entire capitalistic infrastructure is metastasized into every aspect of our lives, no

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<sup>742</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>743</sup> Aronson, *Sartre’s Second Critique*, *Op. Cit.*, 258.

<sup>744</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, xvi.

single product isolated from the rest, just as the invention of the car necessitated the creation of a new transportation infrastructure, the transmutation of neighborhoods into waystops along highways, the creation of new billboards for the proliferation of new forms of advertising for products only tangentially (if at all) related to the driving experience itself, and so forth. Indeed, for Marcuse, an integral component to radical social change was precisely the injection of a “new sensibility” into this practico-inert of technical rationality, a new sensibility which is, itself, a “*praxis*” taken up into the miasma of the practico-inert to change it from within. As he said:

The new sensibility has become, by this very token, *praxis*: it emerges in the struggle against violence and exploitation where this struggle is waged for essentially new ways and forms of life: negation of the entire Establishment, its morality, culture; affirmation of the right to build a society in which the abolition of poverty and toil terminates in a universe where the sensuous, the playful, the calm, and the beautiful become forms of existence and thereby the *Form* of the society itself.<sup>745</sup>

Further:

They can emerge only in the collective *practice of creating an environment*: level by level, step by step – in the material and intellectual production, an environment in which the nonaggressive, erotic, receptive faculties of man, in harmony with the consciousness of freedom, strive for the pacification of man and nature.<sup>746</sup>

Feenburg notes that long before Marcuse’s or Sartre’s critiques, the genre of science fiction literature anticipated the Dystopian vision of the technocratic future wherein technology effectively enslaved the human agents that created it, taking on, in essence, a life of its own, human goals and individuality enslaved to the will of the machine, seeking the fulfillment of a perfectly technological society which, concurrently,

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<sup>745</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 25.

<sup>746</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

is by Marcuse's association likewise "a perfectly rationalized society."<sup>747</sup> From *A Brave New World* to *1984*, this theme has become the predominant trope of the entire genre, manifesting countless times *since* Marcuse, as well, testifying to the enduring concern. From HAL in Kubrik's iconic tale *2001: A Space Odyssey* to the rise of the machine age in *Terminator*, in these tales the best way to ensure a perfectly rational society *is* to associate it with the perfectly technological society, precisely as Marcuse articulated; a process which often entails the enslavement or eradication of humanity itself, viewed from the lens of the technology as the greatest threat to pure rationality and "the isolated individualistic hero of these tales," the Peircean individual of wider social feeling, "stands for the human values inevitably ground under foot by the march of reason."<sup>748</sup> For "the fetishism of the commodity world...can be destroyed only by men and women who have torn aside the technological and ideological veil which conceals what is going on, which covers the insane rationality of the whole – men and women who have become free to develop their own needs, to build, in solidarity, their own world."<sup>749</sup> Presented in Marcuse's own unique idiom, these are the Peircean individuals of a wider social feeling, those that have found a way to transcend and dissolve the stultifying and nearly overwhelming nexus of beliefs perpetuated by authority to seek new horizons, new possibilities, to find the requisite alternatives to the current milieu in which to create the tension necessary for inquiry, growth and radical social change. Since the cause of indoctrination *is* a totalizing system of technological indoctrination (this "technical rationality"), Peircean individuals of wider sorts of social feeling must be able to overcome the forces that "have shaped the very instincts and needs of men" and thus

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<sup>747</sup> Feenburg, "The Critique of Technology: From Dystopia to Interaction," *Op. Cit.*, 212.

<sup>748</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>749</sup> Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *Op. Cit.*, 131.



these unique individuals must be “physiologically and psychologically able to experience things, and each other, outside the context of violence and exploitation,”<sup>750</sup> that is, in a Peircean sense, outside the totalizing belief-nexus perpetuated by the authority (which, for Marcuse, would be identified *with* technical rationality itself).

It is here that Marcuse fully departed from the traditional instrumental vision of technology as inherently neutral. “From this dystopian standpoint, technical progress is not just a value-neutral increase in efficiency but a whole new way of life.”<sup>751</sup> This position, what Feenburg terms “substantive theories of technology,” rejected the value-neutral view of the instrumentalists arguing, instead, “it is actually a distinct cultural framework embodying its own particular values.”<sup>752</sup> This critique is likewise present in Heidegger (one of Marcuse’s most prestigious mentors) saying “the outstanding feature of modern technology lies in the fact that it is not at all any longer merely ‘means’ and no longer merely stands in ‘service’ for others, but instead...unfolds a specific character of domination,”<sup>753</sup> effectively creating a “new kind of society, not simply a streamlined version of the old.”<sup>754</sup> Feenburg grants us a practical example to illustrate this point further:

A city traversed by freeways is not the same place as the old pre-automotive urban center. This obvious fact indicates the limits of the neutrality of technology. Of course, the automobile is indifferent to its driver’s destination, but it requires infrastructural preconditions in order to be operated at all. Supplying those preconditions actually reshapes the world in which destinations are chosen, transforming fields and neighborhoods into roadbeds. This example is characteristic: what in

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<sup>750</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 25.

<sup>751</sup> Feenburg, “The Critique of Technology: From Dystopia to Interaction,” *Op. Cit.*, 212.

<sup>752</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>753</sup> Quoted in Michael Zimmerman, *Heidegger’s Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, Art* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 214

<sup>754</sup> Feenburg, “The Critique of Technology: From Dystopia to Interaction,” *Op. Cit.*, 213.

modern societies we call progress in efficiency is precisely the employment of means with such massive impacts.<sup>755</sup>

The practical activity of the unique individuals constructing more efficient modes of transport is taken up by the collective project of the technocracy, not an isolated event, but the catalyst for an overhaul of an entire nation's infrastructure. Nor is this the end of the cycle, for the technocracy moves on from Feenburg's example ever-forward, ever-progressing, making the world more rational, more technological, more efficient, and the world changes beyond what any unique individual's participation in that march to progress initially entailed. We are "*inside* the machine, that technology is not merely a tool extending our capabilities."<sup>756</sup>

Nevertheless, technology *has* been employed to great positive benefit, minimizing scarcity for some and taking substantial steps to minimize death and suffering through medical innovations. It takes, as Feenburg notes, an "astonishing nerve to persist in radical social criticism" against a society that has used technology, to a some degree, "in feeding its members."<sup>757</sup> But as Marcuse himself said, "obstinacy [is] a genuine quality of philosophical thought"<sup>758</sup> and thus his critique comes as no surprise. "To be obstinate," Feenberg continues, "means to reject the easy reconciliation with society, to keep *a sense of reality* based on longer time spans, deeper tensions, higher expectations and goals."<sup>759</sup> For Feenburg, the heart of Marcuse's enterprise, and the justification for his critique of the technological apparatus in a society that, nevertheless, provides countless amenities

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<sup>755</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>756</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>757</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>758</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press 1968), 143.

<sup>759</sup> Feenburg, "The Critique of Technology: From Dystopia to Interaction," *Op. Cit.*, 208.

and pleasures to its people, was based upon what appears to be a very Peircean conception of a longer run view of the issues at play. Marcuse did not merely look to the past and the present in noting the historical development of capital and technology but, like Marx himself, looked, too, to the future. Within a much wider vision, “longer time spans” that reveal “deeper tensions” and “higher expectations,” Marcuse could find a more objective footing in his critique, not limiting himself to merely pitting the advantages against the disadvantages in the modern technological milieu but placing those advantages and disadvantages in the context of a *continuously* unfolding narrative into the future. With this perspective, Marcuse justified his obstinacy: simply because the technocracy has positive side-effects to its hegemonic dominion over the lives of its populace *now* in no way invalidates the need for a critical theory that may maintain the advantages while at the same time elevating the disadvantages, given enough time, that is, in the long run. Marcuse...

... was not merely complaining about a system he didn't like. He was imagining how it will appear to a backward glance rooted in the wider context of values evolved over past centuries and destined to achieve realization in the very technology of a future society. The obsolescence of the present system will be obvious in this hypothetical future, justifying the obstinacy of those who persisted in critique through these critical times.<sup>760</sup>

This somewhat Utopian notion of “pacifying”<sup>761</sup> technology, as Marcuse will call it, is a point of great contention and controversy in his later work for it is unclear if Marcuse ever provided a decisive method for achieving these ends. For “despite his success in reviving critical Marxism and undermining rationalistic justifications of social hierarchy,

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<sup>760</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>761</sup> “Advanced society, Marcuse argued, is capable of ‘pacifying’ existence but artificially maintains competition and violence as the basis for domination and inequality,” *Ibid.*

Marcuse lacked an adequate account of how change might be brought about.”<sup>762</sup> As Offe notes, “the details of this program...remain so unclear that it is not easy to see how Marcuse can escape the reproach of obscuritanism” for it “remains to be seen whether a change in the ‘direction of technical progress’<sup>763</sup> would suffice to concretize the concept of a revolutionary technology.”<sup>764</sup>

Nevertheless, in providing a substantive critique of technology, Marcuse at least illuminated the otherwise obfuscated exploitative and indoctrinating tendencies of the machine-age, a key first step in the production of a positive alternative. One central example Marcuse drew upon was the utilization of technics (implicitly, its transformation into “technology” as he defined it above) by National Socialism in Germany during the Third Reich:

National Socialism is a striking example of the ways in which a highly rationalized and mechanized economy with the utmost efficiency in production can also operate in the interest of totalitarian oppression and continued scarcity. The Third Reich is indeed a form of “technocracy”: the technical considerations of imperialistic efficiency and rationality supersede the traditional standards of profitability and general welfare. In National Socialist Germany, the reign of terror is sustained...by the ingenious manipulation of the power inherent in technology: the intensification of labor, propaganda, the training of youths and workers, the organization of the governmental, industrial and party bureaucracy—all of which constitute the daily implements of terror—follow the lines of greatest technological efficiency.<sup>765</sup>

We see all of the primary trappings of Peirce’s method of authority: from the indoctrination of the young to the proliferation of propaganda to reify the beliefs of the power majority. The transformation of technics to technology through the utilization of

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<sup>762</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>763</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 222.

<sup>764</sup> Offe, “Technology and One-Dimensionality: A Version of the Technocracy Thesis?” *Op. Cit.*, 217.

<sup>765</sup> Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” *Op. Cit.*, 41 – 42.

the machinery towards the end of domination bears direct and immediate import to the ways in which individualism is both defined and expressed within such a society. Marcuse noted the impact the technological age has had upon the concept of individualism as it was understood in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and the rapid decline in the fundamental values that sense of individualism maintained. He noted:

If we try to assemble in one guiding concept the various religious, political and economic tendencies which shaped the idea of the individual in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, we may define the individual as the subject of certain fundamental standards and values which no external authority was supposed to encroach upon. These standards and values pertained to the forms of life, social as well as personal, which were most adequate to the full development of man's faculties and abilities. By the same token, they were the "truth" of his individual and social existence. The individual, as a rational being, was deemed capable of finding these forms by his own thinking and, once he had acquired freedom of thought, pursuing the course of action which would actualize them. Society's task was to grant him such freedom and to remove all restrictions upon his rational course of action.<sup>766</sup>

In this idealized form of pre-technological society, we see shades of the type of autonomy of inquiry championed by Peirce, precisely the same sort of autonomous inquiry that the method of authority sought to dissolve in order to perpetuate its own beliefs and agenda. Nevertheless, even this pre-industrial sense of individualism was influenced deeply by the societal norms and expectations of what virtuous conduct entailed. In this sense, Marcuse distinguished between "rational self-interest" and "immediate self-interest":

The principle of individualism, the pursuit of self-interest, was conditioned upon the proposition that self-interest was rational, that is to say, that it resulted from and was constantly guided and controlled by autonomous thinking. The rational self-interest did not coincide with the individual's immediate self-interest, for the latter depended upon the standards and requirements of the prevailing social order, placed there not by his autonomous thought and conscience but by external authorities. In the context of radical Puritanism, the principle of individualism thus set

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<sup>766</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

the individual against his society. Men had to break through the whole system of ideas and values imposed upon them, and to find and seize the ideas and values that conformed to their rational interest. They had to live in a state of constant vigilance, apprehension, and criticism, to reject everything that was not true, not justified by free reason. This, in a society which was not yet rational, constituted a principle of permanent unrest and opposition. For false standards still governed the life of men, and the free individual was therefore he who criticized these standards, searched for the true ones and advanced their realization.<sup>767</sup>

“Rational self-interest,” the principle of autonomous individualism and freedom to engage in inquiry unconstrained, was thus pitted against “immediate self-interest” to conform to the mores, rules and ideologies of one’s immediate social community, just as the individual was pitted against society itself. The limitations of immediate self-interest were dictated not by one’s own rational inquiry, but by the prevailing “standards and requirements of the prevailing social order.” In order to break through such confines, individualism had to manifest in opposition to, and by overcoming, the social order that set such limitations upon otherwise free, autonomous inquiry, for “false standards still governed the life of men.”

In the Puritanical association that Marcuse invoked as an example here, we see shades of all three of Peirce’s counterproductive methods of belief formation in play. The governing social power, dictating the norms and standards to its members, utilized both tenacity in clinging to those beliefs at all costs, beliefs that are the fundamental and unquestioned guiding principles of that community (*a priori*), and proliferating them to its citizens under the threat of persecution and excommunication (authority). Individualism could emerge only in opposition to those mores, the type of individualism that may be seen in those with a “wider sort of social feeling” articulated in Peirce’s

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<sup>767</sup> *Ibid.*, 42 – 43.

prescribed dissolution of the method of authority, itself. The search for “true” standards, idealized in the method of inquiry, is here, too, the goal of such individuals striving in the face of opposition at every turn. Marcuse even invoked a lovely passage from Milton that not only expressed his point thoroughly but, too, reflected a decidedly Peircean sentiment, as well, an image of a...

...wicked race of deceivers, who... took the virgin Truth, hewd her lovely form into a thousand peeces, and scatter'd them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangl'd body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all,...nor ever shall do, till her Master's second coming...— To be still searching what we know not, by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it (for all her body is homogeneal and proportional.<sup>768</sup>

Such was the “principle of individualistic rationality”<sup>769</sup> at the time, for Marcuse, the drive to find Truth after it had been scattered by the prevailing social mores more interested in their own ideologies than Truth proper. The process is hard, potentially impossible to fully achieve (“we have not yet found them all...nor ever shall do”) just as Peirce’s “long run” implied. Indeed, in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, Marcuse warned that even the categories of “true and false, good and bad, openly become categories of the political economy; they define the market value of men and things.”<sup>770</sup> Just as Peirce warned in his critique of the method of authority, forces beyond the autonomous inquiry

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<sup>768</sup> John Milton’s *Areopagitia* cited by Marcuse, *Ibid.* 43.

<sup>769</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>770</sup> Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *Op. Cit.*, 15.

of individuals dictate values of “truth” and “falsity,” as much as they do moral categories such as “good” and “bad.”<sup>771</sup>

The movement to a more rational and technological society ought to have provided the corrective for this constant battle of rational self-interest and immediate self-interest by doing away with the majority of these irrational presuppositions and limits on both our freedom and capability to engage in free inquiry and achieve a genuine sort of autonomy. Again, just as I mentioned above, the reality of the situation did not unfold in that way.

Liberalist society was held to be the adequate setting for individualistic rationality. In the sphere of free competition, the tangible achievements of the individual which made his products and performances a part of society's need, were the marks of his individuality. In the course of time, however, the process of commodity production undermined the economic basis on which individualistic rationality was built. Mechanization and rationalization forced the weaker competitor under the dominion of the giant enterprises of machine industry which, in establishing society's dominion over nature, abolished the free economic subject.<sup>772</sup>

Effectively, the dominion of a pre-technological system via the ideologies of a social arrangement which had pitted one's rational self-interest (autonomy and free inquiry) against one's immediate self-interest (acquiescence and submission) was not overcome but, rather, merely supplanted by a new form of domination. Rather than submitting to the ideological presuppositions of one's immediate community, weaker competitors and those in the work force had to submit, if they wished to survive, to the “giant enterprises of machine industry” which dictated the *new* mores of society. As Marcuse noted, technology “steadily increases the power at the command of giant concerns by creating

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<sup>771</sup> “According to Marcuse the ethical element was ever more surely in danger of being eradicated by an advanced industrial society seeking to render progress commensurate with the commodity form and the alienating logic of instrumental rationality,” Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, *Op. Cit.*, 237.

<sup>772</sup> Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” *Op. Cit.* . 43.



new tools, processes and products”<sup>773</sup> for “the principle of competitive efficiency favors the enterprises with the most highly mechanized and rationalized industrial equipment.”<sup>774</sup>

The apparatus and the products it produces influence the autonomy of *every* member of that society, from those in power who control the flow of those products, to the workers and consumers who make and purchase them. A reciprocal relation emerges in which the consumers, to some extent, dictate the flow of the market and the direction of the utilization of the technological apparatus that creates these products but so, too, do the vested interests in command of this technology attempt to create the needs and desires *in* the citizens for the goods they wish to profitably sell. As Marcuse noted:

Under these circumstances, profitable employment of the apparatus dictates to a great extent the quantity, form and kind of commodities to be produced, and through this mode of production and distribution, the technological power of the apparatus affects the entire rationality of those whom it serves. Under the impact of this apparatus, individualistic rationality has been transformed into technological rationality. It is by no means confined to the subjects and objects of large scale enterprises but characterizes the pervasive mode of thought and even the manifold forms of protest and rebellion. This rationality establishes standards of judgment and fosters attitudes which make men ready to accept...the dictates of the apparatus.<sup>775</sup>

Thus, a seemingly totalizing, self-perpetuating system of indoctrination was established, infiltrating every facet of human activity and altering the trajectory of human development within the advanced industrial society. The following chapter will deal with several of these key facets of human activity and the ways in which technology (and this this Weberian notion of technical rationality) has infiltrated the realms of higher

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<sup>773</sup> Temporary National Committee, *Technology in Our Economy*, Monograph No. 22 (Washington, DC, 1941), 195, cited in Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” *Op. Cit.*, 43 – 44.

<sup>774</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>775</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

education and consumer culture as means of perpetuating itself and furthering its dominion.

## Chapter 7

### Technology, Individualism and Radical Pedagogy

Peirce distinguished between a call for social individualism in a free, democratic community of inquirers and a demand for radical, atomic individualism in a community living under the aegis of authority. In the former, beliefs ought to flourish and individuals ought to expose themselves to the beliefs of others (else we all become tenacious hermits). In the latter, however, should we immerse ourselves to the same radical degree, for the beliefs we expose ourselves to are not those forged of inquiry, are not fallible, are not contingent, are not open to revision, but are those that *must* be accepted under the norms and values of a profoundly instrumental attitude towards rationality and an extremely indoctrinating status quo. In essence, if we adopt social individualism within the method of authority, we expose ourselves to the contagion of indoctrination, and the social individualism that leads to Truth and freedom in a radically democratic milieu will lead, under the aegis of authority, to the *contamination* of the individuals as they are exposed to the beliefs proliferated by the authority. Marcuse was suspicious of social individualism for precisely this reason: to immerse ourselves in the zeitgeist is to immerse ourselves in the milieu of technical rationality, where what is “rational” is what is “efficient,” and the beliefs stemming from this technocracy perpetuate only alienation and indoctrination to the status quo. This will become the prime motivating force behind Marcuse’s radical pedagogy: his demand for institutions of higher education to be *freed*

from instrumentalism (such institutions wherein inquiry ought to flourish, just as Peirce desired, rather than being transformed into degree mills churning out freshly minted slaves of industry), and wherein the humanities ought to be championed above all as sites of what he called “critical” or “negative” thinking: the free-play of the imagination utilized to excavate the contingency of beliefs proliferated as necessary by placing them in tension with an alternative perspective, effectively “negating” what *is* by pitting it against what *is not*.<sup>776</sup>

It is not merely the desire for the products and those products themselves that influences human individuality, but the entire apparatus of such a society that dictates what is deemed “profitable” in terms of human achievement and what, in essence, the goals should be for human development. Again, there is no *evolution* from the pre-technological stage, but transference of one form of domination for another. Whereas the Puritanical pre-technological coordination dictated the virtues that its members must embody so, too, does the rational or “technological” epoch dictate the virtues of productivity that citizens “ought” to possess in order to thrive. Any form of “quest for wisdom or Truth” is summarily supplanted with an educational path of “training” for the contribution that individual must make to the technological apparatus of production for, as Marcuse said, “individual achievement has been transformed into standardized efficiency.”<sup>777</sup> The individual ...

... has learned to transfer all subjective spontaneity to the machinery which he serves, to subordinate his life to the “matter-of-factness” of a

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<sup>776</sup> Though this moves beyond the scope of this current investigation, considering the fact that one of Marcuse’s mentors was none other than Edmund Husserl, one might be able to detect a similarity here between Marcuse’s theoretical “negation” and Husserl’s deployment of “bracketing” in his phenomenology.

<sup>777</sup> Herbert Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” in *Collected Papers*, vol. 1, *Technology, War and Fascism*, ed. Douglas Kellner (New York: Routledge, 1998), 44.

world in which the machine is the factor and he the factum. Individual distinctions in the aptitude, insight and knowledge are transformed into different quanta of skill and training, to be coordinated at any time within the common framework of standardized performances.<sup>778</sup>

As the external motivations change in the technological era, so too are the goals altered for the individual and thus the ways in which that individual must adapt and develop in order to serve the needs of that culture and flourish. “Virtue” has become synonymous with “efficiency” in a culture of goals not of the individual’s own making to which that individual must summarily conform.

The individual’s performance is motivated, guided and measured by standards external to him, standards pertaining to predetermined tasks and functions. The efficient individual is the one whose performance is an action only insofar as it is the proper reaction to the objective requirements of the apparatus, and his liberty is confined to the selection of the most adequate means for reaching a goal which he did not set.<sup>779</sup>

Indeed, Marcuse invoked a concept very similar to the type of “imago” that Yancy notes in the suppression of minorities: a false self-image created by the power majority to help ensure the perpetuation of their hold on power. Marcuse said, for example, that the efficiency and complacency in the workers required by the factory owners was in no small part created through the self-identification of the worker with the image of him or herself *as efficient, as complacent, as a good, functional cog in the machine*—an image they are encouraged to champion. He said, “the functioning of capitalism depended largely on the responsible identification of the person with his job, his function—an identification forced upon the worker, but an integral part of good business for the

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<sup>778</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>779</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

bourgeois.”<sup>780</sup> Indeed, just as it is for Yancy, Marcuse noted that a critical aspect of the dissolution of technological rationality was precisely the dissolution of such an assumed imago.<sup>781</sup> He said, “the only counterforce is the development of an effectively organized radical Left, assuming the vast task of *political education*, dispelling the false and mutilated consciousness of the people so that they themselves experience their condition.”<sup>782</sup> Thus, Marcuse connected the radical transformation of consciousness, specifically in this sense the dissolution of the complacent imago, with the general aims of education itself. As he noted:

I have stressed the key role which the universities play in the present period: they can still function as institutions for the training of counter-cadres. The “restructuring” necessary for the attainment of this goal means more than decisive student participation and nonauthoritarian learning. Making the university ‘relevant’ for today and tomorrows means, instead, presenting the facts and forces that made civilization what it is today and what it could be tomorrow—and that *is* political education. For history indeed repeats itself; and it is this repetition of domination and submission that must be halted, and halting it presupposes knowledge of its genesis and of the ways in which it is reproduced: critical thinking.<sup>783</sup>

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<sup>780</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 76. Peirce, the scholar Joseph Brent notes, was likewise disillusioned by the bourgeois culture; likening Peirce to Baudelaire (whom he sees as having great affinity), he argues that both men “were social outcasts whose lives and works engendered disgust and dismay in the respectable bourgeoisie of their respective countries. Both men were bohemians and were in their turn disgusted and dismayed by the bourgeois culture that surrounded them” (Joseph Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* [Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995], 22).

<sup>781</sup> “Historically, the image of the woman as sexual object, and her exchange value on the market, devalue the earlier repressive images of the woman as mother and wife. These earlier images were essential to the bourgeois ideology during a period of capitalist development now left behind ... in comparison, the present image of the woman as sexual object is a *desublimation* of bourgeois morality—characteristic of a ‘higher stage’ of capitalist development ... the (female) body, as seen and plastically idealized by *Playboy*, becomes desirable merchandise with a high exchange value... this image (and reality) of the woman has been determined by an aggressive, male-dominated society ... the patriarchal society has created a female image” (Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *Op. Cit.*, 76-78).

<sup>782</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>783</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

Indeed, though his pedagogical insights remain “relatively unacknowledged,” so, too, do they represent “a core element” of his “overall theory and practice.”<sup>784</sup> The “counterrevolution” of capitalism against such liberating trends is nowhere more apparent than in the transmutation of education (its goals and methods) to align with the demands of the technocracy. Just as Peirce warned, a primary tool utilized by the authority was the indoctrination of the young. As I will discuss in the following chapters, Marcuse noted that even the most democratic states might still be “totalitarian” in their processes of indoctrination and manipulation, not necessarily towards a specific socio-political ideology, but through conformation to the technical base itself.

One of the most significant studies performed by the Frankfurt School in its ongoing study of the indoctrinating tendencies of fascism culminated in *The Authoritarian Personality* in 1950. Though directed by Horkheimer, it was a project that Marcuse was intimately familiar, and its results most certainly contributed to his ongoing analysis of indoctrination, especially in the realm of education, and *especially* in the realm of education of the young. As Ingram summarizes:

The study concluded that the roots of authoritarianism lie in early childhood development. Children raised by parents who enforce rigid discipline and submission to authority are likely to feel helpless and inferior, while projecting their repressed hostility onto out-groups.<sup>785</sup>

As we recall, Peirce recognized not only that one of the central methods of indoctrination by authority was the education of the young but, too, the internal self-regulation of the citizens themselves against their compatriots: learning to turn in hatred and fear from

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<sup>784</sup> Charles Reitz and Stephen Spartan, *Critical Work and Radical Pedagogy: Recalling Herbert Marcuse* (Philadelphia: Published by the authors for the *Critical Refusal(s)* Conference of the International Herbert Marcuse Society, 2011), 24.

<sup>785</sup> David Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy* (Saint Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 1990), 76.

anything that deviated from the prescribed beliefs of the status quo. This phenomenon, described by Peirce, is explained and, to a great degree, validated *by* this study conducted by the Frankfurt School some seventy years after Peirce's initial observations.<sup>786</sup>

No doubt stemming from his close reading of Hegel, Marcuse pitted the German conception of *Bildung*, "the growth, development, and formation of human beings," against the type of efficiency training requisite and championed in the advanced industrial society as the individual is subsumed into (and aligns with) the technical base and its requirements.<sup>787</sup> As *Bildung* aims at "autonomous self learning/self-formation which concerns the whole individual for the purpose of liberating the self and society," necessitating what Marcuse called "dialectical" or "negative" thinking as a prerequisite for *Bildung*, this idea remains "antithetical to any sense of standardization in education and instead embraces education of the body and mind against passive skill acquisition."<sup>788</sup> As Marcuse said:

Once upon a time, it was the proclaimed principle of great bourgeois philosophy that the youth "ought to be educated not for the present but for a better future condition of the human race, that is, for the idea of humanity." Now the council for Higher Education is called upon to study the "detailed needs" of the established society so that the colleges know "what kinds of graduates to produce."<sup>789</sup>

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<sup>786</sup> Intriguingly, Peirce's own upbringing was radically free from authority, culminating in a perpetually rebellious attitude through Peirce's adult life. As Brent notes, "Peirce men were self-consciously unconventional and unique. Benjamin saw to the education of each personally. Individualism was encouraged in the Peirce home by a lack of all discipline, except that which fostered the intellect" (Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 36).

<sup>787</sup> Douglas Kellner, Tyson E. Lewis, and Clayton Pierce, *On Marcuse: Critique, Liberation, and Reschooling in the Radical Pedagogy of Herbert Marcuse* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2008), 9.

<sup>788</sup> *Ibid.*, and Kellner, Lewis and Pierce, *On Marcuse: Critique, Liberation, and Reschooling in the Radical Pedagogy of Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 9, respectively. I will discuss "negative" thinking in detail in the following chapter.

<sup>789</sup> Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *Op. Cit.*, 27.



Thus, “Marcuse builds his theory of education from a basic contradiction between *Bildung* as the cultivation of fully developed individuality and what he would famously describe as ‘one-dimensional man’ and society.”<sup>790</sup> As Reitz notes, “Marcuse believed that the humanities may make us more profoundly human by making us aware of the deepest contradictions of life ... this is because the humanities are thought to be the preserve of ... transcendence or sublimation. They engender the *radical* kind of knowledge that is thought to be nonempirical, speculative, and dialectical.”<sup>791</sup> “Dialectical thinking” is synonymous with “negative thinking,” the ability to think otherwise than the established system of discourse, which, as we have seen, is thoroughly integrated with this Weberian notion of “technical rationality,” conditioning the trajectory of higher education towards efficiency, productivity and capital.<sup>792</sup> As Reitz and Spartan note, “with uncanny prescience then (and immense relevance now) Marcuse broke through the paralysis of criticism in the U. S. making it possible for many *students* to reframe social circumstances theoretically and to learn as they had not been able to learn before.”<sup>793</sup> Marcuse, himself, and his fellow members of the Frankfurt School, through the integration of their own work, offered a forum through which this type of negative thinking, the ability to “reframe social circumstances” from a theoretical perspective *opposed to* the current milieu, in the realm of higher education. The emphasis on critical

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<sup>790</sup> Kellner, Lewis and Pierce, *On Marcuse: Critique, Liberation, and Reschooling in the Radical Pedagogy of Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 9-10.

<sup>791</sup> Charles Reitz, *Art, Liberation, and the Humanities: A Critical Engagement with Herbert Marcuse* (New York: SUNY Press, 2000), 27. Peirce was likewise confronted with this issue, finding it nearly impossible to find work in an academic milieu wherein “the study of religion, logic, ethics, history, science, and philosophy was carefully limited to ‘safe’ courses and instructors” where “the ‘spinous’ Peirce would indeed have made an impossible colleague” due to his penchant for radical and critical thought. Indeed, “it was Peirce’s unsentimental and unyielding quest for truth, regardless of conventional sanctities” which so profoundly disturbed Harvard president Charles Eliot (Brent, *Charles S. Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 109).

<sup>792</sup> Much like as it was for Adorno, as well.

<sup>793</sup> Reitz and Spartan, *Critical Work and Radical Pedagogy: Recalling Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 24-25.

or negative thinking is a fundamental aspect of the humanities, and, as we will see in the concluding chapter on Marcuse, immanent in art and its study, and thus it is no surprise that Marcuse's radical pedagogy emphasized the necessity of the humanities against a rising tide of productivity and efficiency in the sciences. Higher education, in this sense, parallels Marcuse's critique of positivism and its insistence on relegating metaphysics and abstract theory to the dustbin of philosophy by focusing merely on what *is* rather than what *is not* or *what ought to be*. His was a "profound challenge" to the "systems of schooling and higher education in the U. S., specifically opposing the displacement of the humanities in the '60s by Clark Kerr's vision of higher education that had become mainly scientific and technical and that primarily stood in service to the needs of commerce, industry, and the military."<sup>794</sup> Education, under technical rationality, takes on the *new* form of training for integration into the status quo of capitalism in the advanced technological society: students are encouraged to become efficient and productive cogs in the machine of labor, and universities become little more than degree-factories churning out the next generation of said alienated labor. As Marcuse noted:

To create the subjective conditions for a free society [it is] no longer sufficient to educate individuals to perform more or less happily the functions they are supposed to perform *in this* society or extend "vocational" education to the "masses." Rather ... [we must] educate men and women who are incapable of tolerating what is going on, who have really learned what *is* going on, has always been going on, and why, and who are educated to resist and to fight for a new way of life.<sup>795</sup>

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<sup>794</sup> Reitz and Spartan, *Critical Work and Radical Pedagogy: Recalling Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 24. Further, *cf.*, Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

<sup>795</sup> Herbert Marcuse, "Lecture on Education, Brooklyn College, 1968" in *Marcuse's Challenge to Education*, ed. Douglas Kellner, Tyson Lewis, Clayton Pierce, and K. Daniel Cho (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 35.

If what *is* is a profoundly *unfree* society, it is, of course, for Marcuse, never content to educate individuals to acquiescence and integration into such a society. Rather, negative thinking must be the central focus in higher education; it is the ability to: (a) understand what *actually* is (rather than accept the indoctrinating arguments of the Establishment), and (b) to postulate a better possibility from a higher, theoretical perspective.

It is important to note that Marcuse championed the humanities as a site of negative thinking that threw a suspicious eye on technical training and science as anything more than reifications and apologetics of the status quo. Peirce would have certainly agreed with Marcuse on the first part of the claim: individuals of wider social feeling must draw from the past (history), seek other beliefs in other lands (anthropology), walk alongside literary heroes of imagined vistas (literature, poetry), to conjure the beliefs, ideas, and virtues disparate enough from those proliferated by the authority to create the constructive tension requisite for the flourishing of inquiry. But, as to the latter part of the claim, Peirce would have championed science as the *ultimate* discipline for radical thinking—a discipline that has no place for conservatism, that has *always* been forwarded by radicals, that has perennially been stifled *by* authorities for fear that its discoveries would bear witness to the contingency of their proliferated beliefs: it is a radicalism, as he said, that tries experiments. Of course Peirce recognized how science *could* be (and *has* been) coopted by the authority—bearing witness, himself, to scientists whose chief concern was money and who cared not at all for Truth, submitting to the instrumentalism of the age. But science in itself *was* radical, for Peirce, and the

method it utilizes *was* the method of radicalism (when purified from the clutches of the Gospel of Greed, at least), and thus *was* the method that breaks the hold of the authority.

For Marcuse, this disparity between education as *Bildung* and education as prescribed by the technological apparatus of capital was a potential chink in the armor of technological rationality's hold over culture itself. As Marcuse noted in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*:

The "people" speak a language which is all but closed to the concepts and propositions of Marxian theory. Their aversion to its foreign words, "big words," et cetera, not only is the result of their education but also expresses the extent of their commitment to the Establishment and, consequently, to the language of the Establishment. To break the hold of this language means breaking the "false consciousness": becoming conscious of the need for liberation and of the ways to approach this goal.<sup>796</sup>

The language used by the Establishment is antithetical to the language of Marxian theory or any theory that is not conducive to the perpetuation of the beliefs the Establishment needs to promulgate. Education—the exposure to these alternative languages, systems and theories—is antagonistic to those who have succumbed to authority and provides the potential for radical social change in granting an alternative to the system as it *is* in favor of what it *might otherwise be*, granting the type of "wider social feeling" that Peirce discussed in "Fixation of Belief."

Further, this technological apparatus extends to encompass every aspect of the individual's life, requires a "consistent training in the mechanical apprehension of things," and promotes a "conformity to the schedule of living."<sup>797</sup> Such an apparatus

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<sup>796</sup> Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *Op. Cit.*, 37.

<sup>797</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The Instinct of Workmanship* (New York, 1922), 314, and cited in Marcuse, "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology," in *Collected Papers*, vol. 1, *Technology, War and Fascism*, *Op. Cit.*, 48.

demands efficiency, thus demonstrates how the “‘mechanics of conformity’ spread from the technological to the social order; they govern performance not only in the factories and shops, but also in the offices, schools, assemblies and, finally, in the realm of relaxation and entertainment.”<sup>798</sup> In sum, “everything cooperates to turn human instincts, desires and thoughts into channels that feed the apparatus.”<sup>799</sup> On the topic of “virtues” in this technological rationality, Rose notes,

The continuously expanding utilization of technology in production initiates a pervasive and totalizing social logic (technological rationality) in which potential challenges to the purposes and goals of the productive system are subordinated to, and silenced by, the presumed virtues of ever greater technical efficiency, technological expediency, and material growth.<sup>800</sup>

Thus, pre-rational individualism, with all the conflict and tension that it entails, is transmuted into a rational individualism better conceived of as a “technological” individualism wherein the individual submits to a new authority: the authority of the technology itself. Freedom, such as it was prior, “was gradually submerged in the efficiency with which he performed services assigned to him.”<sup>801</sup> The potential for autonomous development becomes reduced to barely more than adaptation and assimilation to the technological status quo in a world that has been “rationalized to such an extent, and this rationality had become such a social power that the individual could do no better than adjust himself without reservation.”<sup>802</sup>

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<sup>798</sup> Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” *Op. Cit.*, 48.

<sup>799</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>800</sup> Brad Rose, “The Triumph of Social Control? A Look at Herbert Marcuse’s ‘One Dimensional Man,’ 25 Years Later,” *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 35 (1990): 55 – 68, 56.

<sup>801</sup> Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” *Op. Cit.*, 45.

<sup>802</sup> *Ibid.*, 46. “Getting along is identical with adjustment to the apparatus. There is no room for autonomy. Individualistic rationality has developed into efficient compliance with the pre-given continuum of means and ends” (*Ibid.*).

One of the most troubling aspects of the association between the “rational” and the “technological,” and one key factor in accounting for its efficacy and historical endurance, is precisely this notion that the technological *is* the rational and, as such, becomes the desired object of inquiry, masquerading as fact and “Truth.” Marcuse will delve into this relationship between the technological and rational more deeply in *One-Dimensional Man*, articulating the ways in which “false needs” masquerade as “true needs” and authentic alternatives to the technocratic apparatus are dissolved as undesirable or implausible.<sup>803</sup> Precisely because the technological era replaced the pre-rational apparatus, emphasizing technics’ ability to replace the superstition and presuppositions of the previous age with a freedom *from* such hindrances to autonomous inquiry, the new technological age was seen *as* rational, as the means and culmination of the goals of the rational self-interest along with the dissolution of immediate self-interest. As we have seen in Marcuse, of course, it was anything but. Just as in Peirce, authority’s hold on power was in no small part conditioned by their need to present their beliefs as timeless and necessary rather than historically contingent (a contingency which would necessarily involve comparison, doubt and the engine for radical social change through the reinstigation of inquiry). So, too, do we see here the tacit assumption that technology *was* rationality itself, that “modernity was said to be rational in the strong sense that its

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<sup>803</sup> As I will demonstrate in my analysis of *One-Dimensional Man*, the conflation between the “technical” and the “rational” will be a primary impetus for the rise of the proliferation of “false needs,” as Marcuse described them: those needs so above and beyond the “vital” or “true needs” that they are wholly superfluous to human flourishing, yet deeply and ubiquitously desired. Technological innovation will give rise to new “false” needs as well as the proliferation of the advertising and social constructs designed to perpetuate the desire for the commodities themselves, an issue intimately entwined with the belief that the “technical” (the advanced, the technological) *is* the rational, thus resulting in the association between “what is rational” and the commodities involved in these “false needs” (*i.e.*, it is rational to desire these commodities and what might otherwise be viewed as “false” or superfluous needs take on a presumed air of being “vital” or “true” needs).

cognitive foundations—science and technology—were superior to those of any earlier society.”<sup>804</sup> As Marcuse said:

The facts directing man’s thought and action are not those of nature which must be accepted in order to be mastered, or those of society which must be changed because they no longer correspond to human needs and potentialities. Rather are they those of the machine process, which itself appears as the embodiment of rationality and expediency.<sup>805</sup>

Submission to what amounts to little more than a *new* apparatus of domination came to be seen, instead, as an alignment with a finally rational structure against which there seemed no positive reason to rebel: “all protest is senseless”—for it was not *nature* that needed to be mastered, nor irrational mores than no longer corresponded to human needs, but a world systematized and structured to the apparent benefit of the rational human agent, and aligning with his or her own unique rationality.<sup>806</sup> As Marcuse affirmed and advised, “business, technics, human needs and nature are welded together into one rational and expedient mechanism. He will fare best who follows its directions, subordinating his spontaneity to the anonymous wisdom which ordered everything for him.”<sup>807</sup>

What sort of individual would wish to rebel against such an apparatus? Only a lunatic, a “crank,” would turn his or her nose up at the ease and expediency the technological era of “rationality” affords.<sup>808</sup> A society riddled with euphoric indulgences at every turn, perpetuating ease and leisure (for some), eradicating disease and sickness (for those who can afford it), are all products of the technological epoch. But just as

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<sup>804</sup> Andrew Feenburg, “The Critique of Technology: From Dystopia to Interraction,” in *Marcuse: From the New Left to the Next Left*, edited by John Bokina and Timothy J. Lukes (Kansas City: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 211.

<sup>805</sup> Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” *Op. Cit.*, 46.

<sup>806</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>807</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>808</sup> *Ibid.*

Marcuse would go on to note in *One-Dimensional*, as “advanced industrial society becomes richer, bigger, and better ... the defense structure makes life easier for a greater number of people and extends man’s mastery of nature,” it comes at the price of the dissolution of autonomous individualism.<sup>809</sup> Even within a far more pessimistic conception of technics as reduced to the domineering role of technology in *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse noted:

The technological processes of mechanization and standardization might release individual energy into a yet uncharted realm of freedom ... the very structure of human existence would be altered; the individual would be liberated from the work world’s imposing upon him alien needs and aliens possibilities. The individual would be free to exert autonomy over a life that would be his own. If the productive apparatus could be organized and directed toward the satisfaction of the vital needs, its control might well be centralized; such control would not prevent individual autonomy, but render it possible ... in actual fact, however, the contrary trend operates: the apparatus imposes its economic and political requirements for defense and expansion on labor time and free time, on the material and intellectual culture. By virtue of the way it has organized its technological base, contemporary industrial society to be totalitarian.<sup>810</sup>

Technology within the advanced industrial society does, indeed, fulfill miraculously the various “vital needs”—which Marcuse delineates in *One-Dimensional Man* as including “nourishment, clothing, lodging at the attainable level of culture”<sup>811</sup>—but, too, is utilized by the technological apparatus to coerce individuals into repressing their need for *only* those desires and adds, too, a slew of “false desires,” that is, false consumer needs, so far

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<sup>809</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), xli.

<sup>810</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>811</sup> *Ibid.*, 5. These “vital needs” are *material* needs only, saying nothing of any non-material needs that may, too, be vital. Materialism will certainly provide the basis for much of Marcuse’s critique of the advanced industrial society, for it is the “advanced industry” that so conditions the goals and values of the citizens within such a milieu. But, as I’ll demonstrate throughout the exploration of both *Eros and Civilization* and Marcuse’s ruminations on a new “aesthetic dimension,” the dissolution of the “false needs” (of materialism) would potentially open up new avenues for the creation (and fulfillment of) “vital needs” of both a material and immaterial (cognitive, aesthetic, creative, imaginative, etc.) sorts.



and above what the vital needs demand that a new form of “surplus repression” is born.

As Malinovich explains:

Advances in technology had made it possible to produce all necessary goods and commodities in a fraction of the time it used to take. It was no longer necessary for human beings to repress their natural desires in order to devote most of their time to providing for the necessities of life. The continued surplus repression in capitalist society was due to the fact that the economic monopolies which dominate advanced capitalist society—to increase their gains and maintain their position—had created through advertisement and mass media a series of false consumerist needs, the satisfaction of which required continued toil and repression.<sup>812</sup>

In conjunction with the technological era’s association with the post-irrational era, presenting itself *as* the rational itself, comes the very real side-effect of the numerous indulgences and positive benefits that come with that technological proliferation. It becomes all the more absurd, it would seem, to rebel against it. However, as Marcuse noted in the passage above, while technics inherently possesses the potential for genuine emancipation, the opposite occurs: for although the individual conceives him or herself to be “emancipated” from the irrationality of the pre-industrial era, from the superstition and imposed societal norms, even from the oppressive force of nature itself, that emancipation is limited to, and conditioned by, the terms of a new administrative apparatus. This same sentiment is reflected in the earlier essay:

At first glance, the technological attitude rather seems to imply the opposite of resignation. Teleological and theological dogmas no longer interfere with man’s struggle with matter; he develops his experimental energies without inhibition. There is no constellation of matter which he does not try to break up, to manipulate and to change according to his will and interest. This experimentalism, however, frequently serves the effort to develop a higher efficiency of hierarchical control over men.<sup>813</sup>

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<sup>812</sup> Myriam Miedzian Malinovich, “On Herbert Marcuse and the Concept of Psychological Freedom,” in “Modern Masters,” special issue, *Social Research* 49, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 158-180, 167.

<sup>813</sup> Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” *Op. Cit.*, 48.

Again, the potential for technics to free humankind from the dogmas of a pre-rational era are co-opted by the technological apparatus to serve its own ends, where all apparently autonomous inquiry (“experimentalism”) serves only “the effort to develop a higher efficiency of hierarchical control over men.” In short, one master is overcome only to be replaced by another. As Farr expresses it:

For Marcuse, technology should be a means to an end, that end being liberation, the end of useless toil and labor. The burden of labor should be attenuated so that human beings have more time to cultivate other talents that they may have and enjoy life to a greater degree. However, in many cases technology is not the means to an end but an end in itself.<sup>814</sup>

Thus technology, in this sense, is both the means and the end; it dictates both *what* we value and desire and *how* we procure the objects of our values and desires. In this sense, as Marcuse noted exhaustively, technology becomes a totalizing apparatus:

There is no personal escape from the apparatus which has mechanized and standardized the world. It is a rational apparatus, combining utmost expediency with utmost convenience, saving time and energy, removing waste, adapting all means to the end, anticipating consequences, sustaining calculability and security.<sup>815</sup>

The structure of the advanced industrial society is thus so totalizing that it becomes totalitarian—self-contained and self-perpetuating by the very conditions of its structure. “Totalitarian,” at first glance, seems an odd terminological choice to describe a society that provides a certain type of liberty (indeed, prides itself on this) and induces, at the least, a pleasant sort of euphoria in its citizens. But this precisely is the paradox of advanced industrial societies, and such further obfuscates the irrationality of their nature as they offer both satisfaction and a certain form of apparent liberty, while remaining

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<sup>814</sup> Arnold Farr, *Critical Theory and Democratic Vision: Herbert Marcuse and Recent Liberation Philosophies* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 93-94.

<sup>815</sup> Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” *Op. Cit.*, 46.

totalitarian in the very structures that perpetuate them at the cost of human autonomy. As Marcuse explained in *One-Dimensional Man*, “‘totalitarian’ is not only a terroristic political coordination of society, but also a nonterroristic economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests.”<sup>816</sup> As Feenburg elaborates, “the danger is not merely nuclear weapons or some similar threat to survival, but the obliteration of humanity’s special status and dignity as the being through which the world takes on intelligibility and meaning.”<sup>817</sup>

Needs, desires, thoughts, aspirations—all are conditioned by these vested interests with technology as the base for its dominion. So, too, can we add “Truth” itself to the list of the conditionals in such an advanced industrial society. As noted above, if the “technological” and “rational” have become synonymous in the minds of the citizenry, the culmination of the technological world of innovation and exploration must, too, be a good indicator of the approximation to “Truth”—at least, far more so than the previously conceived pre-technological epoch:

As the laws and mechanisms of technological rationality spread over the whole society, they develop a set of truth values of their own which hold good for the functioning of the apparatus—and for that alone. Propositions concerning competitive or collusive behavior, business methods, principles of effective organization and control, fair play, the use of science and technics are true or false in terms of this value system, that is to say, in terms of instrumentalities that dictate their own ends. These truth values are tested and perpetuated by experience and must guide the thoughts and actions of all who wish to survive. Rationality here calls for unconditional compliance and coordination, and consequently, the truth values related to this rationality imply the subordination of thought to pre-given external standards. We may call this set of truth values the technological truth.<sup>818</sup>

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<sup>816</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 3.

<sup>817</sup> Andrew Feenburg, *Heidegger and Marcuse: The Catastrophe and Redemption of History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 14.

<sup>818</sup> Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” *Op. Cit.*, 49-50.

As we recall from the exploration of Peirce's "method of authority," one of the fundamental aspects of that totalitarian method was the proliferation of beliefs conducive to the administration's perpetuation of its own power. These beliefs were necessarily pawned off as timeless truth, not the "Truth" generated by a communal engagement in the method of inquiry. The synchronicity with Peirce's insights here is profound. Consider how the "truths" proliferated by the technocracy, according to Marcuse here, are "truth values of their own which hold good for the functioning of the apparatus—and for that alone" dictating "their own ends;" how rationality becomes "compliance" rather than autonomous inquiry; and how authentic "Truth," or its approximation, is supplanted with the truth *of* the authority itself, what Marcuse called here "technological truth."<sup>819</sup>

This technological reality is juxtaposed with what Marcuse called "critical rationality," which is central to his critical theory, and defined generally in terms of "principles of autonomy," "whose values can be fulfilled only if it has itself shaped all personal and social relationships."<sup>820</sup> This "critical" form of rationality may well be associated with the "wider sort of social feeling" borne of those individuals capable of assessing the otherwise obfuscated structures of authority and seeking radical alternative structures. The problem of actually *achieving* such a wider sort of social feeling is that "the growth of the industrial apparatus and of its all-embracing control over all spheres of life" is seemingly without bounds.<sup>821</sup> Technological rationality as been so "inculcated" in such citizens that any potential for slippage has already been minimized or outright negated.<sup>822</sup> As Peirce noted, the beliefs proliferated by the authority are necessarily taught

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<sup>819</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>820</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>821</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>822</sup> *Ibid.*

to the young. Here, too, Marcuse noted that these beliefs are so all-pervasive that individuals are brought up in the milieu of technological truth where the greatest employment of their otherwise autonomous rationality is to “follow those who put their reason to profitable use.”<sup>823</sup>

As such, Marcuse’s critique of technical rationality, as we have seen, bears not only upon his critique of higher education in America but, too, went on to influence the radical pedagogy of countless others in his wake.<sup>824</sup> For example, as Davis notes:

In the classroom and through his writings and lectures, Marcuse defended the radical activism of the ‘60s. The emergence of an international student movement, the social movements of people of color, the rise of feminist activism brought a new, more optimistic dimension to Marcuse’s ideas. The seduction of the ‘one-dimensional society’ could be resisted ... working so closely with him during that period, I learned that while teaching and agitation were very different practices, students need to be assured that politics and intellectual life are not two entirely separate modes of existence.<sup>825</sup>

As will be developed throughout the course of the following chapters, Marcuse had a distinct utopian vision of a society in stark contrast to the technical milieu of the current advanced industrial society, one that may be brought about by highlighting several key sites of potential radical change, not the least of which was a student movement that Marcuse always championed. The humanities needs not have a direct political application, as Davis points out here, but, rather, inherent in its structure is the type of negative thinking requisite to bring about radical social change in the political realm. Thus, as Davis astutely shows, though the political and the pedagogical were “different

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<sup>823</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>824</sup> Reitz and Spartan note that Marcuse’s influence directly contributed to the pedagogical insights of theorists like “Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, Michael Apple, Douglas Kellner” as well as Angela Davis (Reitz and Spartan, *Critical Work and Radical Pedagogy: Recalling Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 25).

<sup>825</sup> Angela Davis, “Reflections on Race, Class, and Gender in the USA,” in *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, ed. Joy James (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 317-318.

practices,” the latter certainly inspired students to suggest radical alternatives in the realm of the former. This necessitates a break from higher education “as it stands,” namely, that “the major purpose of education is to make the world safe for global capitalism.”<sup>826</sup> Rather than generate students who are little more than “supplicants of corporate America and to work at the behest of the corporate bottom line,” Marcuse insisted that higher education create the free intellectual space where negative thinking may flourish and offer a radical break from the current, indoctrinating milieu.<sup>827</sup> This free intellectual space where negative thinking may flourish is a thoroughly democratic ideal, a space where students are not barred from entering into ongoing intellectual dialogues and are not conditioned to submit to a certain enforced and widely proliferated status quo offered by the Establishment—precisely as Peirce warned against in his critique of authority and precisely as he advocated in his conception of the ideal community of inquirers where inquiry may go where it may, free and uninhibited by indoctrinating beliefs. As such, as Reitz and Spartan note, Marcuse thus demonstrated not only the incompatibility of advanced industrial capitalism (complete with its technical rationality) and higher education, but also “capitalism’s incompatibility with democracy” *in general*.<sup>828</sup> Technical rationality, in conjunction with commodity fetishism in advanced capitalism, demands efficiency and productivity and thus closes off those avenues, traditionally located in the humanities, that engage in the type of negative thinking which could, in turn, lead to radical social change *beyond* the classroom and into the realm of political *praxis*.

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<sup>826</sup> Peter McLaren, *Che Guevara, Paolo Freire, and the Pedagogy of Revolution* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 196-197.

<sup>827</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>828</sup> Reitz and Spartan, *Critical Work and Radical Pedagogy: Recalling Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 26.

If success via technological rationality is more a matter of assimilation and adaptation to the mores of the technocracy, genuine human autonomy gives way to a society-wide heteronomy wherein the highest possible goal to be pursued would be *such* successful adaptation to the technocracy that one finds oneself *as* one of the vested interests. “The pursuit of self-interest now appears to be conditioned upon heteronomy, and autonomy as an obstacle rather than stimulus for rational action.”<sup>829</sup> Autonomy present in such a heteronymous society presents itself as so anomalous that it is shunned, its agents viewed as (as Marcuse names them) “cranks” to be summarily marginalized from the status quo. Just as those individuals with a wider sort of social feeling risked retribution and ostritization, not merely by the authority itself but by one’s own neighbors, so, too, was autonomy viewed in Marcuse’s technocracy as an “obstacle rather than a stimulus” to rationality, a rationality presumed as embodied in precisely the administration they’d rebel against making their autonomy appear, thus, the inverse of rational, namely, irrational.

The relationship, then, between the individual and the community becomes far more complex. “It seems to be self-evident that mass and individual are contradictory concepts and incompatible facts.”<sup>830</sup> Marcuse was inspired by, and invokes here, the insights of Lederer who observes that the “crowd”:

is, to be sure, composed of individuals—but of individuals who cease to be isolated, who cease thinking. The isolated individual within the crowd cannot help thinking, criticizing the emotions. The others, on the other hand, cease to think: they are moved, they are carried away, they are elated; they feel united with their fellow members in the crowd, released

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<sup>829</sup> Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” *Op. Cit.*, 50.

<sup>830</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

from all inhibitions; they are changed and feel no connection with their former state of mind.<sup>831</sup>

Peirce noted the efficacy of the method of authority throughout history, and conceded that that method was, perhaps, the best for most people: for if intellectual slavery is what the mass of humankind desires, then intellectual slaves they ought to remain. Here, too, we see that the “crowd” is not a population of “isolated individuals,” but a homogeneous mass who have ceased to think for themselves and feel a sense of unity and solidarity with “their fellow members in the crowd” for no reason beyond indoctrination and submission to the mores of the technocracy. This is the manifestation of what Sartre called “seriality” in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*: the solidarity of otherwise disparate individuals, for example, lining up at a bus stop, rather than the authentic “group-in-fusion” forged of common purpose *against* the mores of a given hegemony. For Marcuse, the “isolated individual” was thus championed as over and beyond this mass of unthinking humanity as a rarity and represented in stark contrast to the rest.

An initial problem seems to arise given the scope of this current project. It would seem that Marcuse (and Lederer before him) was not admonishing “atomic individualism” but, rather, was *championing* it as a productive alternative to a type of “social individualism” forged of solidarity-via-indoctrination. Marcuse *was* aware of a certain type of atomic individualism that is forged of technological rationality that has, as he calls it, an “atomizing” effect on individual autonomy. As he noted in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, “at the base of the pyramid atomization prevails. It converts the *entire* individual—body and mind—into an instrument, or even part of an

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<sup>831</sup> Emil Lederer, *State of the Masses: The Threat of the Classless Society* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1940), 32ff., cited in Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” *Op. Cit.*, 53.



instrument: active or passive, productive or receptive, in working time and free time, he serves the system.”<sup>832</sup> In this sense of technological rationality’s ability to reduce the individual to a mere cog in the vast mechanized network, Marcuse did, indeed, lament the type of “atomized” individual produced by such an apparatus. Further, the “new individualism” that Marcuse championed was *not* a solipsistically cocooned individual, akin to the individual of tenacity in Peirce, who recedes from the indoctrinating effects of consumer culture.<sup>833</sup> For, as Marcuse noted, “the bourgeois individual is not overcome by simply refusing social performance, by dropping out and living one’s own style of life. To be sure, no revolution without individual liberation, but also no individual liberation without the liberation of society.”<sup>834</sup> This “*dialectic of liberation*” entails that the “individual liberation (refusal) must incorporate the *universal* in particular protest, and the images and values of a future free society must appear in the personal relationships within the unfree society.”<sup>835</sup> Thus, a strict sort of “atomic” individualism was antithetical to radical social change for Marcuse, as it was, too, for Peirce’s ideal community of inquirers.

As will be discussed throughout the following chapters, Marcuse, too, had an utopian vision wherein individualism necessarily takes on quite a different tone when the backdrop milieu of the oppressive technocracy no longer dictates the lived conditions for its populace or demands a faux “solidarity” via indoctrination of their fundamental mores. In such an ideal vision, technology would be reformulated and “pacified” back to its technic form where, instead of indoctrination, its potential for emancipation would be

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<sup>832</sup> Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *Op. Cit.*, 14.

<sup>833</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>834</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>835</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49.

invoked. For Marcuse “did not despair of the future in technological societies,” and rather than “identifying an essence of technology that condemned human beings eternally to servitude,” he “sought historical causes for the undesirable effects of technical progress” in hopes of shedding those effects in favor of the emancipatory potential inherent in his view of “technics.”<sup>836</sup> As Feenberg further expands:

Despite his sharp criticism of “technological rationality,” [Marcuse] still maintains the old Marxist faith in the ultimate liberating potential of technology. Technology still represents for Marcuse the hypothetical possibility of overcoming scarcity and the conflict to which it gives rise, but capitalism “represses” this technical potential for emancipation by casting society in the form of an ever renewed struggle for existence.<sup>837</sup>

Indeed, in various places throughout his work, Marcuse made such claims as “technology has become the great vehicle for *reification*,” as well as that “science and technology are the great vehicles for liberation.”<sup>838</sup> And was, thus, “obliged to offer correctives to his strong critical claims, asserting the neutrality, validity and instrumental effectiveness of science and technology despite their ‘ideological’ character.”<sup>839</sup> In essence, Marcuse took a “substantive” view of technology in the present but professed an underlying *ideal* potential for an “instrumental” view in the future—for he ultimately did not call “for the dismantling of modern industrial society.”<sup>840</sup> Instead, he suggested:

If the completion of the technological project involves a break with the prevailing technological rationality, the break in turn depends on the continued existence of the technical base itself. For it is the base which has rendered possible the satisfaction of needs and the reduction of toil—it remains the very base of all forms of human freedom. The qualitative change rather lies in the reconstruction of this base—that is, in its

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<sup>836</sup> Feenberg, “The Critique of Technology: From Dystopia to Interaction,” *Op. Cit.*, 214.

<sup>837</sup> Feenberg, “The Bias of Technology,” *Op. Cit.*, 227.

<sup>838</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 168 and Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 12, respectively.

<sup>839</sup> Feenberg, “The Bias of Technology,” *Op. Cit.*, 227.

<sup>840</sup> Feenberg, “The Critique of Technology: From Dystopia to Interaction,” *Op. Cit.*, 218.

development with a view of different ends ... the new ends, as technical ends, would then operate in the project and in the construction of the machinery, and not only in its utilization.<sup>841</sup>

Thus, he would conclude, “technology-based domination is contingent and might be overthrown in a process involving not only political change but also fundamental shifts in the form of rationality.”<sup>842</sup> The realization of this “contingency” over the purported “necessity” that rationality would dictate is in Peirce’s critique as well when individuals of wider social feeling must first and foremost find some way to establish a viable alternative to the present status quo, which thereby reveals the muddled contingency of the apparatus and again frees potential for radical social change. For Marcuse, as we will explore in subsequent chapters, the transmutation of this technical base of modern societies took the form of a type of “reduction” to the aesthetic realm, wherein “technology ... undergoes a *reduction* since it would be free of the unessential burden of resisting nature,” and thus “released from these external impositions, technology could return to its origins” of aiding in emancipation rather than negating its potential.<sup>843</sup> *One-Dimensional Man* elaborates how “the rationality of domination has separated the Reason of science and the Reason of art, or, it has falsified the Reason of art by integrating art into the universe of domination” and that the Reason of art, that is, “aesthetic Reason,” “from the beginning ... contained ... the free play and even the folly of imagination, the fantast of transformation,” opening up new vistas heretofore unseen and inexperienced, viable alternatives to the status quo.<sup>844</sup>

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<sup>841</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 231.

<sup>842</sup> Feenberg, “The Critique of Technology: From Dystopia to Interaction,” *Op. Cit.*, 214 – 215.

<sup>843</sup> Timothy J. Lukes, “Mechanical Reproduction in the Age of Art: Marcuse and the Aesthetic Reduction of Technology,” *Op. Cit.*, 231.

<sup>844</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 228.

As Agger observes, “Marcuse links what he calls the ‘new sensibility’ to the development of a pacified technology.”<sup>845</sup> By “pacification,” Marcuse meant “a mastery of nature which would liberate nature from its own violence and cruelty.”<sup>846</sup> For Marcuse:

The liberated consciousness would promote the development of a science and technology free to discover and realize the possibilities of things and men in the protection and gratification of life, playing with the potentialities of form and matter for the attainment of this goal.<sup>847</sup>

In *One-Dimensional Man*, for example, Marcuse noted, “cultivation of the soil is qualitatively different from destruction of the soil, extraction of natural resources from wasteful exploitation, clearing of forests from wholesale deforestation” just as “poverty, disease, and cancerous growth are natural as well as human ills—their reduction and removal is liberation of life.”<sup>848</sup> But beyond “these small, protected areas, it [the pacified technology] has treated Nature as it has treated man—as an instrument of destructive productivity.”<sup>849</sup>

The resistance lies in the technocracy’s tenacious (to invoke a very Peircean conception) ability to endure through its totalizing omnipresence and the citizen’s equally tenacious clinging to the beliefs of technology’s emancipatory power (in its current indoctrinating manifestation) and the goods and euphoric pleasures that result from it. As Lukes notes, “the needless constrictions of individual members” in an advanced industrial society, a theme Marcuse will refer to as “surplus repression” in *Eros and Civilization*

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<sup>845</sup> Ben Agger, “Marcuse and Habermas on New Science,” *Polity* 9, no. 2 (Winter 1976): 158-81, 167.

<sup>846</sup> Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 87.

<sup>847</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 24.

<sup>848</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 240.

<sup>849</sup> *Ibid.*

which we will explore in full shortly, is called “one-dimensionality (the catch-phrase for this constriction)” which “is encouraged not because the allowance of alternative-thinking and acting would plunge humanity back into the depths of rampant scarcity.”<sup>850</sup>

Rather:

Alternative-thinking might stimulate a popular recognition of the fact that technology, having provided the means for the elimination of scarcity, may now be ready for subservience to a newer, more advanced goal: a “pacified existence,” in which the universe of objects is seen as complementary to human life.<sup>851</sup>

The domination and indoctrination of a populace, the acquiescence to a universe of indulge at the price of radical autonomy, must necessarily be kept obfuscated in light of technology’s very real capacity to end (or significantly limit) the effects of scarcity. If not, the authority runs the risk of allowing that populace to understand in full the contingency of such an apparatus and potentially desire something new: all clearly antagonistic to the vested interests who profit so magnificently from the system as it is.<sup>852</sup> This would herald the end of the age where technology *was* rationality, and a new age wherein “technological rationality would be replaced by a human rationality, in which the uses of human productivity and technology would be seriously and continuously evaluated.”<sup>853</sup>

Indeed, there is, too, a place within such a system *as it is* (rather than in an idealized utopian vision) for such social individualism and authentic solidarity to bring about the radical social change that Marcuse sought. Such a place would have groups

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<sup>850</sup> Timothy J. Lukes, *The Flight into Inwardness: An Exposition and Critique of Herbert Marcuse’s Theory of Liberative Aesthetics* (Toronto: Susquehanna University Press, 1985), 31.

<sup>851</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>852</sup> “Such a goal, of course, is anathema to the controllers of technology and production, for it would demand that technology and the associated productive forces would be responsible to an overarching consideration” (*Ibid.*).

<sup>853</sup> *Ibid.*

forged not of indoctrination and submission, but of individuals of like mind and purpose striving *against* such heterogeneity, having arrived at that proposed course of action autonomously.<sup>854</sup> As Schoolman notes, for example, “technics does not impose a single collective interest that simply cuts across class cleavages ... technological rationality materially reconstitutes class society into a single homogeneous mass ... a monolithic technical class.”<sup>855</sup> As with Peirce, the state under the reign of authority *did*, indeed, provide a certain form of unity. But this unity was not to be championed for it was not based upon autonomous associations for a common goal but, for Marcuse and Peirce both, was forged of an indoctrinating process wherein a single, homogenous mass is *created* by the vested interests via the perpetuation of beliefs stemming from the omnipresent technological base of advanced industrial societies, the dissolution of “all social classes into one atomized mass of happy consumer-slaves.”<sup>856</sup> As Brunkhorst explains, Marcuse saw a dominant tendency in advanced industrial societies:

The dominant tendency of late capitalism is towards a system of identity that makes everything that is not already assimilated to it become so, and that effectively prevents any deviation or any resistance. The new media of mass culture that achieve this assimilation include sound film, radio, magazines, photography, short stories, cartoons, automobiles, stunt films, popular biographies, box office hits, movie stars, pop songs, soap operas, sports, air raid drills, modern propaganda, totalitarian sloganeering, close-ups, functional architecture, television, jazz, advertising, and easy listening music.<sup>857</sup>

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<sup>854</sup> “The rational form of human association as brought about and sustained by the autonomous decision and action of free men” via the deployment of “critical rationality” (Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” *Op. Cit.*, 55).

<sup>855</sup> Morton Schoolman, *The Imaginary Witness: The Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse* (New York: The Free Press, 1980), 146.

<sup>856</sup> Hauke Brunkhorst, “Critical Theory and the Analysis of Contemporary Mass Society,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*, ed. Fred Rush (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 273.

<sup>857</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

Critics have noted that Marcuse failed to provide a clear path out from the totalizing indoctrination of technical rationality, but he *did*, nevertheless, at least point to the sites of potential emancipation. For example, as Offe notes, this totalizing effect of industrialization:

brings critical thought to a point where there is no longer any hope of finding a social group or institutional sector that could be the starting point for the progressive unfolding of contradictions. However, when it is no longer possible to identify the social-structural locus of the contradictions that nevertheless continue objectively to exist, when critique, hope and need for change are no longer represented socially, then the critical theory of industrial society is forced to safeguard the objectivity of its pronouncements on a *psychological* and *anthropological* level. The *system of needs*, the essential starting point of Marcuse's critical theory, as of every other, shifts its sources from political economy to psychoanalysis.<sup>858</sup>

Like Peirce, for Marcuse, Offe notes, the genesis for the potential for radical social change lied in the “unfolding of contradictions” requisite to bring about the tension between society *as it is* and society *as it may be*—but with technology masquerading *as* rationality and infiltrating every sector of the socio-economic-political realm, Marcuse turned to Freudian psychoanalysis to delve into the ways in which such a technocracy manipulates the needs and desires of its citizens in the hopes of finding an emancipatory seed within the individual him or herself. This excavation of human needs and desires formed the bedrock of his most iconic treatises, *Eros and Civilization* and *One-Dimensional Man*, which both warrant individual chapters. To these two texts, we turn.

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<sup>858</sup> Claus Offe, “Technology and One-Dimensionality: Version of the Technocracy Thesis?” trans. Anne-Marie Feenberg, in *Marcuse: Critical Theory & The Promise of Utopia*, ed. Robert Pippin, Andrew Feenberg, and Charles P. Webel (South Hadley, MA: Bergen & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1988), 218. Marcuse challenged the distinction between “social problems” and “individual psychological problems” and maintained that the latter could no longer (if ever it could) be wholly isolatable from the former. I will discuss this transition at length in my chapter on *Eros and Civilization*.

In sum, for Marcuse, technics, initially a neutral entity with the potential for emancipation *or* indoctrination, became corrupted and co-opted by the technological society's authoritarian apparatus that reaches into the most intimate thoughts of the individual, dictating beliefs and desires as well as truth itself, transforming the individual from autonomous to heteronymous and dissolving authentic individuality into the indoctrinated throngs of the "masses." As he noted, "the spreading hierarchy of large scale enterprise and the precipitation of individuals into masses determine the trends of technological rationality today."<sup>859</sup> Associating technology with rationality as the advanced industrial society does, resistance to the mores indoctrinated into the citizenry by the fundamental need for this apparatus to self-perpetuate is viewed as "irrational," in comparison to the numerous indulgences, pleasures and quasi-"freedoms" such a society affords. As Agger encapsulates it: "his view is that domination infiltrates the psyche, changing the person into an automaton charged with the infinite consumption of unneeded goods."<sup>860</sup> Technology, in short, becomes the engine not of emancipation but of indoctrination, it erodes individual autonomy, and thus became a central target for *all* of Marcuse's critical endeavors throughout his long career.

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<sup>859</sup> Marcuse, "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology," *Op. Cit.*, 60.

<sup>860</sup> Agger, "Marcuse and Habermas on New Science," *Op. Cit.*, 167-168.



## Chapter 8

### One-Dimensional Thought, Self and Society

With the rise of fascism in Germany, and the enduring tenacity of capitalism's ability to retain its efficacy, Marcuse provided a succinct social psychology of the working class within the advanced industrial society, exploring why it is, as O'Casey expresses it, "when the Marxist script for the world drama required a European working class to emerge as the agent of historical change, the working class turned out to be quiescent and helpless."<sup>861</sup> Through various means of technological domination, as explored in the previous chapters, capitalism effectively altered the desires of its populace so completely that the drive for radical social change—to engage in what Marcuse called "The Great Refusal"—was negated, and replaced by an endless series of euphoric indulgences supplanting the drive to true happiness and authentic freedom. "The fundamental thesis of *One-Dimensional Man* is that the technology of advanced industrial societies has enabled them to eliminate conflict by assimilating all those who in earlier forms of social order provided either voices or forces of dissent."<sup>862</sup> As Marcuse asked:

If the individuals are satisfied to the point of happiness with the goods and services handed down to them by the administration ... and if the individuals are pre-conditioned so that the satisfying goods also include

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<sup>861</sup> Jeffrey O'Casey, "Eroticizing Marx, Revolutionizing Freud: Marcuse's Psychoanalytic Turn," *Kritike* 3, no. (June 2009): 1-19, 11.

<sup>862</sup> Alisdair MacIntyre, *Herbert Marcuse: An Exposition and a Polemic* (New York: The Viking Press, 1970), 71.

thoughts, feelings, aspirations, why should they wish to think, feel and imagine for themselves?<sup>863</sup>

The individual has “become a willing subject” of the technological proliferation that has granted innumerable minor pleasures, satisfying the needs that often the technology, itself, created: a totalizing, insular system of self-perpetuation that has so deeply penetrated into the daily needs and desires of its citizens that their willingness to even envision alternative discourses is compromised, if not outright dissolved.<sup>864</sup>

The inner, private space of the individual “has been invaded and whittled down by technological reality. Mass production and mass distribution claim the entire individual.”<sup>865</sup> It is in this realm of the inner, private space that “negative” thinking is capable of taking place, that is, the envisioning of entirely alternative modes of discourse and society. “Naming the ‘things that are absent’ is breaking the spell of the things that are, it is the ingression of a different order of things into the established one.”<sup>866</sup> As Kellner notes, negative thinking “‘negates’ existing forms of thought and reality from the perspective of higher possibilities.”<sup>867</sup>

The eradication of negative thinking is a paradigmatic symptom of what Marcuse called “one-dimensional thought.” Without the ability to envision alternative discourses, perhaps even without the will to do so, the industrial society effectively negates the possibility of negation, killing the potential to refute the current status quo and strive towards a potential alternative. This is the negation of the very possibility of what

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<sup>863</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 50.

<sup>864</sup> Robert Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970), 68.

<sup>865</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 10.

<sup>866</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>867</sup> Douglas Kellner, introduction to *One-Dimensional Man*, by Marcuse, *Op. Cit.*, xi-xxxix, xiv.

Marcuse called the “Great Refusal,”<sup>868</sup> “the protest against that which is,”<sup>869</sup> the “refusal of the structures and dynamics of capital appropriation ... including the patterns of workforce remuneration and reproduction.”<sup>870</sup> Without a Great Refusal resulting from negative thinking, the advanced industrial society successfully perpetuates itself and negates the possibility of radical social change.

Arguably Marcuse’s most iconic text, *One-Dimensional Man* represented the culmination of his earlier investigations into the indoctrinating role of technology and technical rationality and presented a powerful explanation for why the Marxist script failed to unfold in these societies by providing a social psychology of the working class in such a stultifying milieu. Expanding on his critique of the omnipresence of technical rationality within every facet of our lives, Marcuse demonstrated the ways in which the technocracy perpetuated itself through the creation and manipulation of what he called “false needs” through various means of advertising and media proliferation. Further, *One-Dimensional Man* articulated the insular, self-sustaining nature of such a society through its ability to either repel or subsume all possible contrary doctrines to terms the technocracy, itself, finds conducive to its own perpetuation. Having discussed Marcuse’s critique of technological rationality in the previous chapters, we are now in a good place to explore this central text in detail: from the creation of “false needs” to the dissolution of individuality, the technical base of advanced industrial societies will factor into every aspect of the technocracy’s hold on power and the indoctrination of its citizens:

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<sup>868</sup> “The term ‘Great Refusal’ was inspired by Andre Breton, who defended the total refusal of the institutions, values and way of life in bourgeois society. It is this notion of individualistic refusal and revolt that characterizes Marcuse’s political conception in ODM” (Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984], 279).

<sup>869</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 63.

<sup>870</sup> Charles Reitz and Stephen Spartan, *Critical Work and Radical Pedagogy: Recalling Herbert Marcuse*. Philadelphia: Published by the authors for the *Critical Refusal(s)* Conference of the International Herbert Marcuse Society, 2011, 26.

One-dimensional society is a society that lacks negativity, critique, and transformative practice. It is a society without opposition. Citing trends toward conformity, Marcuse describes one-dimensional society as creating “false” consumer needs that integrate individuals into the existing system of production and consumption via mass media, advertising, industrial management, and uncritical modes of thought. In other words, current society and culture are purely “affirmative,” legitimating the on-going existence of material poverty, injustice, and inequality.<sup>871</sup>

Throughout, I will endeavor to lay bare some of the parallels that exist between Marcuse and Peirce, especially the false sense of solidarity forged of belief manipulation and indoctrination, as well as the reduction of autonomous inquiry to the heteronomous, passive acceptance of the terms of the technocracy itself. Though Peirce concerned himself more with the *method* by which beliefs are formed under the rule of such a totalitarian authority, the *means* by which the vested interests accomplish this reflect many of the same concerns Marcuse exposed in his own critique. From the manipulation of needs and desires in Marcuse to the manipulation of beliefs in Peirce, from the repulsion and/or appropriation of contrary doctrines that would undermine the efficacy of the one-dimensional society in Marcuse to the various means of historical revisionism and proliferation of propaganda in Peirce, the indoctrination, destruction of authenticity and autonomy in the individual, and self-perpetuating structures of the objects of *both* philosophers’ critiques will be made plain.

It was a social psychology that Marcuse was providing in *One-Dimensional Man*, a project that acted as a kind of addendum to Marx’s project. There were two primary facets of the transition from capitalism to communism that Marx imagined. The first, the breakdown of the capitalistic system, he went into at length. The second, the change in

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<sup>871</sup> Douglas Kellner, Tyson E. Lewis, and Clayton Pierce, *On Marcuse: Critique, Liberation, and Reschooling in the Radical Pedagogy of Herbert Marcuse* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2008), 10.

consciousness of the proletariat, Marx did not account for as thoroughly as he did the other. Indeed, commentators like Macintyre suggest that so little was said about the growth of political consciousness in the working class that Marx failed to provide an adequate social psychology, a failure that, Macintyre contends, prompted Marcuse to pick up where Marx, effectively, left off.<sup>872</sup>

The question becomes, of course, what happened to the individuals in these modern societies when the moment came for action, for disruption, for revolutionary change, and there was only passivity and acquiescence? As Habermas confirms, “history had taken a course quite contrary to the predictions of Marxist theory”—as demonstrated not only by the rise of fascism and Stalinism but, too, the tenacity of capitalism to maintain its dominion.<sup>873</sup> Further, as O’Day notes, instead of the transition from capitalism to socialism, what happened was the “integration of the proletariat into the status quo,” and “the absence of a revolutionary agent for progressive social change”—that is, according to Habermas, “the stifling of the proletariat” and “its lack of a revolutionary consciousness.”<sup>874</sup> What cognitive effect did these societies have over their citizens to quell revolution, not exclusively through external means, but primarily through diluting the conscious desire *for* change? “The suggestion, therefore, that under capitalism men are dominated and exploited not merely by external oppressors, by those who own and those who rule, but by forms of consciousness which prevent them from liberating themselves.”<sup>875</sup>

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<sup>872</sup> Macintyre, *Herbert Marcuse: An Exposition and a Polemic*, *Op. Cit.*, 45.

<sup>873</sup> Jürgen Habermas, “Psychic Thermidor and the Rebirth of Rebellious Subjectivity,” in *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia* (South Hadley, Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1988), 8

<sup>874</sup> O’Day, “Eroticizing Marx, Revolutionizing Freud: Marcuse’s Psychoanalytic Turn,” *Op. Cit.*, 11 and Habermas, “Psychic Thermidor and the Rebirth of Rebellious Subjectivity,” *Op. Cit.*, 8, respectively.

<sup>875</sup> Habermas, “Psychic Thermidor and the Rebirth of Rebellious Subjectivity,” *Op. Cit.*, 8.

The primary thrust of *One-Dimensional Man* was an investigation into this very phenomenon, a social psychology at the heart of advanced industrial societies whose technological proliferation has so whittled down the individual's private space that the individual is no longer capable (perhaps, no longer willing) to envision alternative structures, societies and discourses.<sup>876</sup> The individual has "become a willing subject" of the technological proliferation that has granted that individual innumerable minor pleasures that satisfy the needs that often the technology, itself, created.<sup>877</sup> A totalizing, insular system of self-perpetuation that has so deeply penetrated into the daily needs and desires of its citizens that their willingness to even envision alternative discourses is compromised if not outright dissolved. This is the annihilation of what Marcuse called "negative thinking" and without negative thinking there can be no Great Refusal.

The inner, private space of the individual "has been invaded and whittled down by technological reality. Mass production and mass distribution claim the entire individual."<sup>878</sup> It is in this realm of the inner, private space that negative thinking could otherwise manifest, the envisioning of entirely alternative modes of discourse and society. "Naming the 'things that are absent' is breaking the spell of the things that are, it is the ingression of a different order of things into the established one."<sup>879</sup> As Kellner elucidates, negative thinking "'negates' existing forms of thought and reality from the perspective of higher possibilities."<sup>880</sup>

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<sup>876</sup> "The fundamental thesis of *One-Dimensional Man* is that the technology of advanced industrial societies has enabled them to eliminate conflict by assimilating all those who in earlier forms of social order provided either voices or forces of dissent," Macintyre, *Herbert Marcuse: An Exposition and a Polemic*, *Op. Cit.*, 71.

<sup>877</sup> Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 68.

<sup>878</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 10.

<sup>879</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>880</sup> Kellner, introduction to *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, xiv.

The eradication of negative thinking is a paradigmatic symptom of one-dimensional thought. As Newman proposes, “negative thinking, in Marcuse’s view, is the sole source of creative social criticism, and he feared the obliteration of creativity in social life.”<sup>881</sup> Without the ability to envision alternative discourses, perhaps even without the will to do so, the advanced industrial society effectively negates the possibility of negation, killing the potential to refute the current status quo and strive towards a potential alternative discourse. This negates the possibility of Marcuse’s “Great Refusal,” “the protest against that which is.”<sup>882</sup> Without a Great Refusal resulting from negative thinking, the advanced industrial society successfully perpetuates itself and negates the possibility of radical social change.

Profoundly disturbing is the necessity for technological proliferation to penetrate so deeply into the individual consciousness that the ability to envision and desire alternative discourses becomes a near impossibility. In order to perpetuate themselves, industrial societies have to sedate individual citizens into a state of acquiescence; they do so through the proliferation of minor pleasures that effectively masquerade as true happiness and thus provide no incentive for radical social change. For Marcuse, the result was a conformist, one-dimensional, inauthentic society.<sup>883</sup>

The complacency Marcuse saw as a reasonable explanation for the failure of the historical moment of transition from capitalism to socialism was one of the primary foci

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<sup>881</sup> Allen R. Newman, “Notes on Marcuse’s Critique of Industrial Society,” *Review of Social Economy* 34, no. 2 (October 1976): 173 – 188, 178.

<sup>882</sup> Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, *Op. Cit.*, 279 and Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 63, respectively.

<sup>883</sup> I understand inauthenticity in the Heideggerian sense; cf., Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, *Op. Cit.*, 236 for a detailed description of Heidegger’s influence on Marcuse, especially the juxtaposition of the “one-dimensional” and the “authentic” individual, and a chart comparing the two types of individuality.

of his *Eros and Civilization*, picked up again in *One-Dimensional Man*.<sup>884</sup> Complacency, Marcuse argued, was fundamentally an issue of desire satisfaction, namely, that without the desire for something more than what the current status quo was offering its citizens, the citizens had no viable reason to engage in the negative thinking that could lead to a Great Refusal and the onset of radical social change.

“If the individuals find themselves in the things which shape their life, they do so, not by giving, but by accepting the law of things—not the law of physics but the law of their society.”<sup>885</sup> To “give” the law of things would be to demonstrate the type of autonomy so prized in Kant’s moral theory and re-imagined in Sartre’s existentialism. Autonomy would therefore be a “self-governing,” as opposed to the heteronomy<sup>886</sup> suggested here lying at the heart of advanced industrial societies in which individuals find themselves shaped by the things in their society rather than taking an active role in shaping themselves.<sup>887</sup> “The inner subjectivity of the individual,” Ingram notes, “is absorbed into, and obliterated by, the impersonal mechanism of the system.”<sup>888</sup> As Farr captures it, “the loss of freedom in so-called democratic societies is not necessarily the result of force, but rather, it results from a smooth, systemic, systematic, reshaping of the human psyche so that freedom is given up voluntarily.”<sup>889</sup> Consider, for example, Marcuse’s distinction between true and false needs:

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<sup>884</sup> “Marcuse’s intention here is clear: to explain why the transition from capitalism to socialism did not happen, why...the revolutionary class had been dissolved and became conformist,” O’Day, “Eroticizing Marx, Revolutionizing Freud: Marcuse’s Psychoanalytic Turn,” *Op. Cit.*, 12.

<sup>885</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>886</sup> “The development and satisfaction of these needs is heteronymous” (*Ibid.*, 5).

<sup>887</sup> “Independence of thought, autonomy, and the right to political opposition are being deprived of their critical function in a society which seems increasingly capable of satisfying the needs of the individuals through the way in which it is organized” (*Ibid.*, 1).

<sup>888</sup> David Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 1990), 80.

<sup>889</sup> Arnold Farr, *Critical Theory and Democratic Vision: Herbert Marcuse and Recent Liberation Philosophies* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 84.



False are those which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery and injustice. Their satisfaction might be more gratifying to the individual, but this happiness is not a condition which has to be maintained and protected if it serves to arrest the development of the ability (his own and others) to recognize the disease of the whole and grasp the chances of curing the disease. The result then is euphoria in unhappiness.<sup>890</sup>

What can it mean to have a “superimposed” need? Needs, by nature, well up from within the individual’s consciousness reflecting some sort of lack that “needs” to be fulfilled. For a need to be superimposed is a subtle notion, indeed. The superimposition of false needs arise within, and well up from, an individual’s consciousness as if they were true, non-superimposed needs. And this is the crucial point, something indicative of many aspects of industrial society: the perpetration of the structures of the system go unnoticed, passing as if they were the natural discourse, the natural order, of events. By doing so, Marcuse noted, industrial societies guard themselves against critique (for there appears there is nothing amiss that needs to be critiqued if false needs pass as true needs and what is artificial and superimposed passes as natural and good, especially when a genuine sort of euphoria is the result). As he said above, it arrests the “development of the ability ... to recognize the disease.”

We have seen shades of this in Peirce—though his is a subtle nod to an implicit mechanism utilized by the authority, it is one critical to our investigation here. For Peirce, the realization of the contingency of a societal apparatus was enough to at least open the door to radical social change by bringing different socio-political possibilities into tension, hence resulting in doubt that the current milieu was the best choice, and opening inquiry to get cognitive progress unfolding once more. To combat this, as we saw, the

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<sup>890</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 4–5.

authority had to guard against such a creation of tension by pawning off the beliefs they would have their citizens maintain (invariably to the authority's advantage) as historically *necessary* and apodictically certain. Such an authority would *have* to do so, for contingency comes tension-laden in the realization that one's societal structure is but one among several and may well not be the best one to maintain. The interplay between "false needs" and what Marcuse will call "true" or "vital needs" carries the same effect: precisely because false needs go unrecognized as "false" by those who maintain them, critical self-reflection becomes impossible, for Marcuse, and the realization of the contingency of their desires (not to mention the indoctrinating method of the desires' creation) goes unnoticed.<sup>891</sup>

"Most of the prevailing needs to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and hate, belong to this category of false needs."<sup>892</sup> As appropriate an observation as this may have been in the nineteen-sixties, its relevance has blossomed proportionately into the twenty-first century. The barrage of advertisements contemporary society endures is nearly beyond belief: ubiquitous billboards, commercials on radio and television, in movie theaters prior to the main attraction, and every webpage on computers and hand-held portable devices. We are inundated with such advertisements, instilling needs in us that were not there before, needs superimposed upon us not in isolation from our fellow man but in accord with him. What is loved, what is popular, what must be had, is constantly changing in a

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<sup>891</sup> So, too, does this coincide with Marcuse's claim that rationality has become technical rationality, not only infiltrating the entire socio-political-economic-cultural milieu but, too, providing the desire for individuals within these societies to want to align themselves with the products and zeitgeist of what appears to be a post-irrational age of which technology (and the goods that stream forth) are part of what it means to be rational at all.

<sup>892</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 5.

protean universe of needs not of our own making. Industrial societies must “create the need for buying the goods that must be profitably sold.”<sup>893</sup> As he said:

No matter how much such needs may have become the individual’s own, reproduced and fortified by the conditions of his existence; no matter how much he identifies himself with them and finds himself in their satisfaction, they continue to be what they were from the beginning—products of a society whose dominant interest demands repression.<sup>894</sup>

The true or “vital” needs—“nourishment, clothing, lodging at the attainable level of culture”<sup>895</sup>—are “the prerequisite for the realization of all needs,” but the superimposed false needs manifest in the same fashion as the vital needs for the individuals in a one-dimensional society, mixing and melding into an indiscernible mess as the social structure of the advanced society replaces a wholly autonomous individual with the heteronomy born of the society’s need to perpetuate itself through its production of items and, in so doing, the production of false needs for items that they naturally, vitally, truly would otherwise not need at all.

The significance of distinguishing the false needs from the true is quite profound. As Marcuse noted, if our needs, our desires, our very instincts are superimposed upon us, and this superimposition is actively perpetrated by a structured society bent on perpetuating itself, the individual loses his or her freedom of autonomous self-development. Further, the individual loses sight of what is lost as a type of artificial euphoria permeates his or her life within the advanced industrial society. False needs supplant true needs, even as just masquerading as true needs, and efficacy for critique is compromised. As long as individuals “are kept incapable of being autonomous, as long as

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<sup>893</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>894</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>895</sup> *Ibid.*

they are indoctrinated and manipulated (down to their very instincts), their answer to this question” of which needs are true and which needs are false “cannot be taken as their own.”<sup>896</sup>

The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood. And as these beneficial products become available to more individuals in more social classes, the indoctrination they carry ceases to be publicity; it becomes a way of life. It is a good way of life—much better than before—and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change. Thus emerges a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behavior in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to the terms of this universe.<sup>897</sup>

The vested interests, the “administrative-bureaucratic apparatus which organizes, manages, and stabilizes capitalist society,” utilize the advanced forms of technology and its proliferation of advertising and media control to “invade” the individual’s “private space” until it is “whittled down by technological reality.”<sup>898</sup> Thus proliferated, it is capable of advancing whatever agenda it deems most profitable, both in a literal sense, and in the sense of the “profitability” of perpetuating its own structure. The creation of false needs is a key component to this agenda, creating needs for products for the sole purpose of profiting from their sale. In creating needs that the vested interests then fulfill,

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<sup>896</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>897</sup> *Ibid.*, 11. The point here—that “It is a good way of life—much better than before”—is a valid one that must not be glossed over. Marcuse, despite his critique of the one-dimensional society and the totalitarian aspects of American society, was predominantly hopeful in America’s potential to be, as he called it, the only land of the future. Further, it reflects his desire not to *abandon* the technological substructure of society (as if to return to some pre-technological epoch) precisely because Marcuse was well aware that science and technology *has* decreased suffering for many citizens in myriad ways. As I will highlight, it is the “rationality” which must be addressed, a rationality that must be liberated from the Weberian confines of technical rationality and instrumental rationality, that will be the heart of the issue—but the seeds for that utopian vision are already in place in a society that does, indeed, offer a way of life that is much better than it was before.

<sup>898</sup> Kellner, introduction to *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.* (paraphrasing Rudolf Hilferding’s *Finance Capital* [1910; repr., London: Routledge, 1981]) and Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 10, respectively.

euphoria overcomes the individual whose “needs” have been fulfilled—a type of *drugged*-stupor, like an addict receiving a fix (that is, a false need for the drug is fulfilled by the otherwise-unnecessary fix and results in a temporary, but very real, euphoria). For, as Ingram notes, “*One-Dimensional Man* contains one of the strongest indictments of the narcotic effects of advanced capitalism ever written.”<sup>899</sup>

In the one-dimensional society, the sensual needs of desire, pleasure, and play seem to coincide with a world of commodities that creates a new biological foundation in our sensual and institutional structures through more advanced forms of capitalism. In other words, the pleasure principle is superficially satiated by the very society that is in fact responsible for the on-going degradation of real, vital needs.<sup>900</sup>

This “drugging rhythm” promotes a type of “one-dimensional thought” that is “systematically promoted by the makers of politics and their purveyors of mass information. Their universe of discourse is populated by self-validating hypotheses which, incessantly and monopolistically repeated, become hypnotic definitions or dictations.”<sup>901</sup> The result is that, within “the mental apparatus, the tension between that which is desired and that which is permitted seems considerably lowered.”<sup>902</sup> The Reality Principle (which I will discuss in the next chapter) “no longer seems to require a ... painful transformation of instinctual needs.”<sup>903</sup> As with Peirce, Marcuse framed the individual’s relationship with his or her society as that of organism/environment transaction. Specifically, in such a milieu, the individual must merely “adapt himself to a

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<sup>899</sup> Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 73.

<sup>900</sup> Kellner, Lewis and Pierce, *On Marcuse: Critique, Liberation, and Reschooling in the Radical Pedagogy of Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 11. The “pleasure principle” mentioned here is where Marcuse’s close reading of Freud in *Eros and Civilization* ties into his critique of advanced industrial societies in *One-Dimensional Man*; the following chapter will delve deeply into that earlier text.

<sup>901</sup> *Ibid.*, 26, 14, respectively.

<sup>902</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-74.

<sup>903</sup> *Ibid.*

world which does not seem to demand the denial of his innermost needs—a world which is not essentially hostile.”<sup>904</sup> Further:

The organism is thus being preconditioned for the spontaneous acceptance of what is offered. Inasmuch as the greater liberty involves a contraction rather than extension and development of instinctual needs, it works for rather than against the status quo of general repression.<sup>905</sup>

If technical rationality is, as Marcuse insisted, ubiquitously proliferated throughout every avenue of advanced society, then any disparity that ever existed between “the desire for goods” and the “permission to indulge in those desires” is minimized or outright dissolved to the obvious benefit of the perpetuation of the technical apparatus. It would make little sense if built into the creation of the goods that must be profitably sold that there wasn’t also a concurrent permissiveness to indulge in precisely those goods and the euphoria they produce. As such, “the organism is thus preconditioned for the spontaneous acceptance of what is offered” both because of its desire to align oneself with rationality (here, technical rationality) as well as the dissolution of any pre-existing taboos or restrictions for those indulgences. Key here, too, is Marcuse’s invocation of the term “tension,” noting how it has been lessened in the milieu of advanced society, specifically, the tension between what is desired and what is permitted, allowing for euphoric indulgences that help perpetuate commodity fetishism. Dr. King cited the need for a constructive, non-violent “tension,” a concept that was central, too, to Peirce’s critique of the counterproductive methods of belief formation, noting that “tension” was the “Secondness” of the encountered world, that which throws our beliefs into doubt precisely because they encounter some resistance and do not unfold as expected, our

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<sup>904</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>905</sup> *Ibid.*

guiding principles no longer leading to the expected conclusions, a process requisite for reevaluation, inquiry and cognitive development. As Bronner notes, Marcuse was aware that:

Resistance has many sources. It can result from the friction created by economic contradictions; it can emerge in response to the arbitrary exercise of political power. Ideas can inspire it; the aesthetic imagination can inflame it. Its sources might even lie deeper within the psychological infrastructure of the individual or species.<sup>906</sup>

Whatever the source of resistance or tension, for Peirce, it was the necessary precondition for cognitive development, the onset of some problematic situation that instigated the cycle of belief formation. For Marcuse, too, it was the requisite underpinning for radical social change, the essence of “negative” or “critical” thinking that called into question precisely those substructures of technology and capital that would prefer to remain obfuscated and keep their citizens in a state of euphoric ignorance in order to successfully perpetuate their agendas. Without tension, specifically, the tension between what is desired and what is permitted, a culture of indulgence is created, precisely the sort of consciousness that aids the flourishing of capital, technology and commodity.

Marcuse called this new disposition of euphoria the “happy consciousness,” free from the negativity and critique of an “unhappy consciousness,” that is nevertheless autonomous and dialectical.<sup>907</sup> The happy consciousness “accepts the given as an

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<sup>906</sup> Stephen Eric Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 237.

<sup>907</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 79. Of course, Marcuse was playing off of Hegel’s notion of the “unhappy consciousness” here.

absolute and undeniable good” rather than engaging in the “negative” thinking of seeing what is concurrent with what it is not, namely.<sup>908</sup>

In Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* the unhappy consciousness is a distinct phase of thought that develops within the odyssey of human consciousness in history where human identity is paralyzed through its own growth and education. Despite achieving a new level of knowledge of reality, the unhappy consciousness fails to achieve a greater, reconciliatory relationship with reality. Drawing on Hegel’s construct of the unhappy consciousness, Marcuse’s happy consciousness retains the same symptom of paralysis of educational striving yet with an importance difference: instead of a sense of incompleteness, the happy consciousness is a pacified mode of thought that is content with its material and historical situation.<sup>909</sup>

The notion of the unhappy consciousness’s sense of “incompleteness” is a subtle but profoundly important one. From Socrates’ definition of wisdom as the incompleteness of his knowledge requisite for the motivation for educational growth, the realization of limitation has ever been the impetus for cognitive development. This theme of “incompleteness” manifested in Peirce, as well, as “doubt,” as his adamant fallibilism, as the tension requisite for inquiry’s instigation and engine for educational development. The “method of authority” strove to negate that sense of incompleteness by forwarding beliefs that the populace passively accepted as absolute, beliefs to the benefit of that authority’s hold on power, creating, as Marcuse called a kind of “happy consciousness,” free from the repulsive sensation of doubt and disequilibrium (in a Peircean sense), thus negating the potential for radical social change or any form of autonomous cognitive development: “Happy consciousness signifies the loss of critical thought.”<sup>910</sup>

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<sup>908</sup> Lewis, Kellner and Pierce, *On Marcuse: Critique, Liberation, and Reschooling in the Radical Pedagogy of Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 11.

<sup>909</sup> *Ibid.*, n.4.

<sup>910</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.



Thus, if “false needs” are a major component of indoctrination, it follows that the *reformulation* of needs became central to Marcuse’s prescribed ascension out of the indoctrination of the technocracy. As he asserts towards the end of *One-Dimensional Man*:

The attainment of autonomy demands conditions in which the repressed dimensions of experience can come to life again; their liberation demands repression of the heteronomous needs and satisfactions which organize life in this society. The more they have become the individual’s own needs and satisfactions, the more would their repression appear to be an all but fatal deprivation. But precisely by virtue of this fatal character, it may create the primary subjective prerequisite for qualitative change—namely, the *redefinition of needs*.<sup>911</sup>

Technology has gotten to the point where it truly *can* alleviate scarcity and diminish sickness and suffering, taking care of our true or “vital” needs. Thus, the deployment of technology becomes intimately bound up with the very definition of needs. The “surplus repression,” which I will explore in full in the following chapter on *Eros and Civilization*, must be dissolved, the creation of false needs for the goods that are proliferated must be dissolved and the entire technical base must be formulated for the singular goal of tending to the vital needs in society, thereby freeing in the individual to lead a more autonomous existence, no longer at the whim and mercy of fads, products and the desire for social status. As with Peirce, Marcuse did not limit the indoctrinating powers to any specific organization or ideology and expanded his critique to all forms of authority that encouraged this sort of “surplus repression.” As Bronner elaborates:

Additional limits on gratification, well beyond the minimum level of repression indispensable for human interaction, will also take institutional form in the patriarchal-monogamic family, the church, the hierarchical division of labor, the bureaucratic state, and a mass media inherently desirous of subverting a genuinely private sphere of life. Institutions such

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<sup>911</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 245.

as these will become the instruments through which “surplus repression” is extracted and maintained for the benefit of the given order.<sup>912</sup>

“The optimal goal” becomes, then, as Marcuse said, “the replacement of false needs with true ones, the abandonment of repressive satisfaction.”<sup>913</sup> With the dissolution of the cause of this “drugged stupor,” this “drugging rhythm” of fix and euphoria (namely, the goods and false needs that drive us towards procuring those goods), citizens within the advanced technocracy would no longer passively accept what is handed down to them by the administration for they would no longer be content with the petty indulgences of the oppressive apparatus of domination at the price of their autonomy. For “all liberation depends on the consciousness of servitude, and the emergence of this consciousness is always hampered by the predominance of needs and satisfactions which, to a great extent, have become the individual’s own.”<sup>914</sup> For Marcuse, despite the myriad euphoric indulgences within nation’s that even *pride* themselves on their emphasis on liberty, the citizens of such a technological apparatus have only the *illusion* of freedom. As he said, even “liberty can be made into a powerful instrument of domination” wherein “free choice among a wide variety of goods and services does not signify freedom if these goods and services sustain social controls over a life of toil and fear—that is, if they sustain alienation.”<sup>915</sup> The illusion of choice is the “freedom” to choose from a variety of goods, services and indulges all to the benefit of the overall technical base, rationality and apparatus whose overall goal has been, and remains, alienation and oppression. As such, Marcuse argued, such “freedom” cannot really be considered freedom at all.

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<sup>912</sup> Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, *Op. Cit.*, 241.

<sup>913</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 7.

<sup>914</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>915</sup> *Ibid.*, 7–8.

For Peirce, the method of authority created a society of “intellectual slaves” with uniform beliefs not of their own making, beliefs passively accepted and administered by the bureaucratic apparatus. This created solidarity forged not of autonomous inquiry towards a common goal (as the prescribed method of inquiry permitted) but, rather, solidarity of acquiescence in which autonomy and individuality were subsumed by the administration. Marcuse, like Peirce, championed solidarity, but the authentic sort, forged of autonomous inquiry towards a common goal, reminiscent, again, of a Sartrean group-in-fusion.<sup>916</sup> One of Marcuse’s central concerns throughout his career was, as Bronner casts it, the “rendering of critical theory capable of building solidarity and informing radical practice.”<sup>917</sup>

Marcuse saw, from the identification of rationality with technology and the manner by which “false” needs were created and proliferated by the vested interests, the same dissolution of autonomy and individuality that Peirce critiqued, the result being a kind of mass mentality, or as Peirce would say, a nation of intellectual slaves. As Kellner notes in his introduction to the second edition:

By the 1950’s, Marcuse ... perceived that the unparalleled affluence of the consumer society and the apparatus of planning and management in advanced capitalism had produced new forms of social administration and a “society without opposition” that threatened individuality and that closed off possibilities of radical social change.<sup>918</sup>

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<sup>916</sup> It would seem that Marcuse’s emphasis on individual autonomy within a milieu of the mass mentality of an advanced one-dimensional society would be at odds with Peirce’s call for social individualism and a communal push for a common goal. I will explore this in full in my concluding chapters but, in brief, I contend that, within the milieu of the method of authority, Peirce and Marcuse *both* champion individual human autonomy (the individuals of wider social feeling) in a kind of “rugged” individualism, but within a more democratic and egalitarian social coordination (within the method of inquiry or, for Marcuse, a liberated rationality in a new aesthetic dimension within his utopian vision) *both* champion a greater sense of solidarity and community without sacrificing individual autonomy.

<sup>917</sup> Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, *Op. Cit.*, 237.

<sup>918</sup> Kellner, introduction to *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, xxv.

Precisely because technical rationality infiltrates every aspect of life, the apparatus of planning and management has “produced new forms of social administration” and control through the perpetuation of false needs (the desire for the goods that must be profitably sold) and their attainment (the euphoric, evanescent moments of purchasing those goods). Media and advertising infiltrate every moment of life, not only altering what individuals would otherwise come to desire but, too, streamlining desires *in general* uniformly such that *all* individuals come to desire the same things as everyone else.

The structure of even the most purportedly democratic technocracy is, itself, totalitarian, in so far as it is self-contained and self-perpetuating by the very conditions of its structure via the indoctrination and manipulation of the desires, needs and developmental processes of its citizenry. “Totalitarian,” at first glance, seems an odd choice of term to describe a society that provides a certain type of liberty (indeed, prides itself on a certain type of liberty) and induces, at least, a pleasant sort of euphoria in its citizens. This paradox<sup>919</sup> of industrial societies further obfuscates the irrationality of the nature of this society as it offers both satisfaction and a certain form of apparent liberty while remaining totalitarian in the structures that perpetuate themselves at the cost of human autonomy.

By virtue of the way it has organized its technological base, contemporary industrial society tends to be totalitarian. For “totalitarian” is not only a terroristic political coordination of society, but also a nonterroristic economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests.<sup>920</sup>

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<sup>919</sup> “Industrial society is highly rational in the development of its technological resources; it become[s] irrational when the success of these efforts opens up new dimensions of social well-being. This is the internal contradiction of the civilization” (Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse, Op. Cit.*, 68).

<sup>920</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man, Op. Cit.*, 3.

The coordination of commercial needs to perpetuate its growth and financial gain is coupled with the technological era's advanced forms of information and advertising proliferation allowing it to completely inundate the individual with whatever product or ideology it deems profitable to advance. "It thus precludes the emergence of an effective opposition against the whole."<sup>921</sup> It is in this sense that the advanced industrial society, despite its emphasis on some form of "freedom," and despite the ubiquitous euphoric indulges it affords its citizens, can still be considered "totalitarian"—for the structures in place to perpetuate the system (the structures themselves) are such that they flatten potentiality and streamline development towards their own ends, subsuming or repelling any possible opposition. This is what Marcuse meant when he claimed the advanced industrial society is "one-dimensional."

The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood. And as these beneficial products become available to more individuals in more social classes, the indoctrination they carry ceases to be publicity; it becomes a way of life. It is a good way of life—much better than before—and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change. Thus emerges a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behavior in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to the terms of this universe.<sup>922</sup>

This type of "one-dimensional thought" is "systematically promoted by the makers of politics and their purveyors of mass information. Their universe of discourse is populated by self-validating hypotheses which, incessantly and monopolistically repeated, become hypnotic definitions or dictations."<sup>923</sup> Key, too, is the society's ability to "militate against qualitative change" by flattening and reducing all content, material or idealistic, to its

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<sup>921</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>922</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>923</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

own, pre-established universe of discourse, a discourse that, as we've seen, is populated by "self-validating hypotheses." Any discourse that cannot be subsumed into this self-validating discourse is repelled. Implicitly here (and explicitly elsewhere) is the dissolution of dialectics, of dichotomies, of opposition of any kind. The pivotal point is that advanced industrial societies dissolve any form of opposition necessary for such dialectical interplay to unfold. Indeed, without opposition, without a multi-dimensionality of opposing universes of discourse, of different potentialities for actualization, of different systems and structures, there is only the closed, heteronymous one-dimensionality of the advanced industrial society.

This sort of "controlled" or "institutionalized desublimation" is the complete "conquest and unification of opposites."<sup>924</sup> Without the threat of the entirely "other," without a threat from outside the established system, there is only the one-dimensionality of the system itself, and whatever options are presented therein are compatible with the totalizing system and, in so being, are only "options" in a very nominal sense without real efficacy. As Katz intones, "this mobilization against conceptual and aesthetic transcendence of one-dimensional thought is the ideological reflex of the mobilization against political transcendence of one-dimensional society."<sup>925</sup> This "affirmative culture," one that identifies purportedly rational interests with the technical base that determines

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<sup>924</sup> *Ibid.*, 77, 79, 71, respectively.

<sup>925</sup> Barry Katz, *Herbert Marcuse and the Art of Liberation* (London: Verso, 1982), 167. I believe what Katz refers to here as "political transcendence" can be read through the Peircean lens of his critique of the method of authority: if individuals of wider social feeling can break the spell of belief proliferation and indoctrination in, as Katz puts it, "conceptual or aesthetic" ways by creating the tension requisite for doubt and a challenge to those proliferated beliefs to get inquiry up and running again, that tension and challenge would potentially undermine the *political* agenda of indoctrination in general, thus allowing "conceptual or aesthetic" transcendence to *become* political transcendence (transcendence out *of* the stagnating confines of the authoritarian milieu). That is to say, what may start as conceptual or aesthetic revolutionary change has, then, the potential to turn into more explicit *political* revolutionary change.

those interests *for* citizens heteronymously, “is for Marcuse a conservative formation resisting any attempt to negate the social whole in the name of radical transformation.”<sup>926</sup>

The use of the term “desublimation” requires a modicum of explanation, as it appears to deviate from its traditional usage in modern psychoanalytic theory. As Ingram summarizes:

*Sublimation* was the term used by Freud to designate the rechanneling of sexual energy away from its primary object toward a “substitute,” which provides a more socially useful type of pleasure. The substitute satisfaction Freud had in mind included professional (especially creative) work and largely intellectual endeavors. Marcuse, following Freud, agrees that the products of high culture and art, which exhibit imagination and beauty, are sublimations ... such products figuratively articulate a life of harmony and fulfillment which is incompatible with the oppressive, utilitarian features of technological society<sup>927</sup> ... Marcuse ... deviates from Freud in regarding sublimation as less a form of repression than a source of liberation. For him, sublimation can serve to extend the principle of pleasure ... to include the full development of the subject’s powers, faculties, and needs. It can also generate intense feelings of social solidarity ... so construed, sublimation would demand the creation of a society without domination, oriented toward aesthetically pleasing forms of work and receptivity.<sup>928</sup>

Conversely, then, for Marcuse, *desublimation* “can issue in forms of ‘freedom’ which are, in fact, repressive,” the technical apparatus’ co-opting of the potentially emancipatory objects of sublimation to reinforce its own interests, technical base, and technological rationality.<sup>929</sup>

The dissolution of opposition appears, in many respects, to be a positive effect of technologically advanced societies but, again, only so far as it supplants true happiness

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<sup>926</sup> Kellner, Lewis, Pierce, *On Marcuse: Critique, Liberation, and Reschooling in the Radical Pedagogy of Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 10.

<sup>927</sup> As Marcuse himself says, “what they recall and preserve in memory pertains to the future: images of gratification that would dissolve the society which suppresses it” (*One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 60).

<sup>928</sup> Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 82.

<sup>929</sup> *Ibid.*

and freedom with a type of euphoria. The system's dissolution of opposites through this controlled, institutionalized desublimation, flattens real possibilities and reduces them to mere options, pre-established, within a pre-established universe of discourse that is, itself, comprised only of tautological hypotheses that are self-perpetuating. Further, "for Marcuse ... it is not just that consumer culture has assimilated potentially oppositional realms of culture but also that these forms of negative and critical thought have been replaced with an operationalized way of thinking and attendant set of values" including "consumer attitudes and behavior" and an "increasing conformity to market logics."<sup>930</sup> As Bronner reveals ...

... socialization will subsequently emphasize competition as progress becomes identified with instrumental rationality and the domination of nature. Emancipatory alternatives concerning the "pacification of nature" will thus fall by the wayside, fantasy will ever more surely become circumscribed within the aesthetic dreams of the individual subject, and a blunting of speculative reason will take place.<sup>931</sup>

Real difference is supplanted with false difference, real needs with false needs, real freedom with media-controlled heteronomy, real potential for growth and development with the pre-structured arenas where growth and development only come in pre-established frameworks and through pre-established terms. And always the latter masquerading as the former, thus effectively denying the possibility for real critique as the problems are obfuscated and euphoria pervades.

Institutionalized desublimation thus appears to be an aspect of the "conquest of transcendence" achieved by the one-dimensional society. Just as this society tends to reduce, and even absorb opposition ... in the realm of political and higher culture, so it does in the instinctual sphere.

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<sup>930</sup> Kellner, Lewis, and Pierce, *On Marcuse: Critique, Liberation, and Reschooling in the Radical Pedagogy of Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 12.

<sup>931</sup> Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, *Op. Cit.*, 241.



The result is the atrophy of the mental organs for grasping the contradictions and the alternatives.<sup>932</sup>

As Kellner and others note, “one-dimensional language incorporates into its very form its own position, again erasing the ability to think against the status quo.”<sup>933</sup> Marks explains that, “when a system ‘works,’ its consequences are taken by most people as its validation. It does not occur to them that an alternative is possible, and that the alternative may work better in the sense that it can provide more satisfactions, less labor, and fewer dangers.”<sup>934</sup> This is the direct association of technology and rationality that Marcuse addressed, and is symptomatic of the instrumental rationality that both Peirce and Marcuse railed against. Negative thinking, indeed, critical theory in general, “is what generates a break with the logic of progress” and, for Marcuse specifically, utilizing “the most radical utopian vision ever generated by the dialectical tradition” bringing about this Great Refusal of all that *is*.<sup>935</sup> Without a Great Refusal resulting from negative thinking, the industrial society successfully perpetuates itself and negates the possibility of radical social change.

Central throughout Marcuse’s critique of the omnipresence and efficacy of the technical base of indoctrination is this “conquest of opposites” and a close study of the positive (and negative) roles of negation in advanced industrial societies. Bernstein diagnoses negativity to be “the deepest, most persistent, and most pervasive term in Marcuse’s work.”<sup>936</sup> But, for Marcuse, “negativity is a positive concept in that only

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<sup>932</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 79.

<sup>933</sup> Kellner, Lewis and Pierce, *On Marcuse: Critique, Liberation, and Reschooling in the Radical Pedagogy of Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 13.

<sup>934</sup> Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 69.

<sup>935</sup> Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, *Op. Cit.*, 237.

<sup>936</sup> Bernstein, “Negativity: Theme and Variations,” *Op. Cit.*, 13.

through negation of social contradictions can conformity and oppression be overcome and real freedom and individuality realized.”<sup>937</sup> This prompts Farr to explain that “positive negation is the recognition of the contradictions that permeate our society.”<sup>938</sup> Negation, as we saw, was made manifest through “negative thinking” which could lead to a “Great Refusal,” that is, to realize the contingency of the technocratic milieu and develop the ability to postulate viable alternatives that challenge the vested interests’ dominion. It was the “negation” of what is. Farr proposes:

One might say negativity has a positive and a negative function ... negativity in its positive function is a negation of the present oppressive and repressive reality ... it is the negation of social forces and structures which dehumanize and prohibit the growth, development, and happiness of every individual in advanced capitalist society. Negativity in its negative function is the negation of human potential. It represents a social order that produces misery instead of happiness, domination instead of freedom, it produces waste in the midst of poverty.<sup>939</sup>

Negation may be both the engine for radical social change, as well as its dissolution under a repressive regime. The former demarks the potential for progressive development whereas the latter dissolves the potential for development through the one-dimensional homogeneity of a society without opposition. As Habermas argues, for Marcuse, “the abstract and ahistorical concept of reason which is at the heart of idealistic philosophy lends itself to all forms of ideology, but the bourgeois ideals, of cognitive and moral universalism on the one hand, of expressive subjectivism on the other, carry also utopian content which transcends the limits of false consciousness.”<sup>940</sup> As Farr contends, this

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<sup>937</sup> Kellner, Lewis, and Pierce, *On Marcuse: Critique, Liberation, and Reschooling in the Radical Pedagogy of Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 10.

<sup>938</sup> Farr, *Critical Theory and Democratic Vision: Herbert Marcuse and Recent Liberation Philosophies*, *Op. Cit.*, 86.

<sup>939</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>940</sup> Habermas, “Psychic Thermidor and the Rebirth of Rebellious Subjectivity,” *Op. Cit.*, 7.

dialectical tension between the two forms of negation in Marcuse has lead some scholars to believe Marcuse was far more inconsistent than perhaps he ultimately was, oscillating, as he seemed to, between the optimism for the former and the pessimism of the latter. Yet, as with Peirce, Marcuse differentiated between an idealized society and the indoctrinating contemporary milieu. “As a dialectical thinker,” Farr suggests, “Marcuse was very sensitive to the persistent interaction between these two forms of negativity,” a sensitivity, he argues, that is indicative of Marcuse’s unique brand of critical theory.<sup>941</sup> For Marcuse’s critical theory reflected the “viscitudes, conflicts, and transformations” of a *specific* society in a *specific* time, otherwise it would fail as a critical theory in general.<sup>942</sup> Kellner sketches Marcuse’s perspective on the Frankfurt School as “a critical theory of society [that] is always a project underway; it is always partial, historical, and subject to revision.”<sup>943</sup> Thus, not only was Marcuse’s critical theory historically situated, but reflected the kind of “fallibilism” inherent in the work of Peirce, namely, that as a project always already “underway,” always “partial,” always “historically,” it is then always “subject to revision.” Negation itself plays a role in this conception of critical theory, namely, that a project *not* subject to revision reflects the kind of apodictic necessity inherent in the stagnatory one-dimensionalizing of a hegemonic technocracy that does not allow the sort of autonomous inquiry and individualism that is inherently protean and evolving. In fact, even in Marcuse’s utopian vision (which I will explore in full below), the society of his imagining is not one of stagnation but, on the contrary, is

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<sup>941</sup> Farr, *Critical Theory and Democratic Vision: Herbert Marcuse and Recent Liberation Philosophies*, *Op. Cit.*, 77.

<sup>942</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>943</sup> Douglas Kellner, “Herbert Marcuse and the Vicissitudes of Critical Theory,” introduction to *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, vol. 2, *Towards a Critical Theory of Society*, ed. Douglas Kellner (New York: Routledge, 2001), 32.

one that *dissolves* the stagnation born of the indoctrinating and one-dimensionalizing aspects of the technical base.

As Habermas affirms, “no doubt, Herbert Marcuse claimed negation to be the very essence of thinking—as did Adorno and Horkheimer,” but Marcuse, Habermas is quick to add, was “the most affirmative among those who praised negativity. With him negative thinking retained the dialectical trust in determinate negation, in the disclosure of positive alternatives.”<sup>944</sup> Schoolman seconds this, arguing that “reason,” properly understood, “*is* negative thinking.”<sup>945</sup>

To think negatively, or dialectically, is to conceive of things as they appear as being limited. Such conceptions spring from a recognition of something’s potentiality. To think in this manner is to deny, cancel, or ‘negate’ a thing’s apparent form. And to think negatively, critically, there must be freedom of thought. Rational faculties must be free from any sort of conditioning by social and political factors that would blind reasoning processes to the existence of possibilities for growth and development.<sup>946</sup>

“Negative thinking” may be properly understood as synonymous with “dialectical thinking,” if we turn to consider Marcuse’s reading of Hegel:

Hegel’s philosophy is indeed what the subsequent reaction termed it, a negative philosophy. It is originally motivated by the conviction that the given facts that appear to common sense as the positive index of truth are in reality the negation of truth, so that truth can only be established in their destruction. The driving force of the dialectical method lies in this critical conviction. Dialectic in its entirety is linked to the conception that all forms of being are permeated by an essential negativity, and that this negativity determines their content and movement. The dialectic represents the counter-thrust to any for positivism.<sup>947</sup>

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<sup>944</sup> Habermas, “Psychic Thermidor and the Rebirth of Rebellious Subjectivity,” *Op. Cit.*, 3.

<sup>945</sup> Morton Schoolman, *The Imaginary Witness: The Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse* (New York: The Free Press, 1980), 75.

<sup>946</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>947</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 26-27.

We see here not only the sharp contrast between “dialectical rationality” and “technical rationality,” but, too, the deep problems associated with the reemergence of emancipatory dialectical rationality in a society where the technical base has so thoroughly inundated the individual that even his or her thoughts, feelings, desires and aspirations accord with those proliferated by the vested interests. So, too, do we see more clearly Marcuse’s need to emphasize the desublimatory aspect of the technocracy’s “conquest of opposites,” in essence, the dissolution of dialectical thinking itself in its citizens. Without the ability to “negate” the present while concurrently positing the potential for something to be “other,” as Schoolman notes above, technical rationality, and its homogenizing and one-dimensionalizing, hold sway, negating (in the negative sense) the potential for “growth and development.” Though Peirce did not use the term “dialectical thinking,” it is clear that the ability to “negate” the present belief set proliferated by the authority in conjunction with the ability to both recognize potential for otherness and view things not as they are (handed down, packaged and constructed) but as they are *not*, in their “limited” capacities, their contingency, in a sense, all this was the necessary catalyst for the return of autonomous inquiry. Nowhere was this more apparent than in Peirce’s critique of authority, not to mention his emphasis on the abductive, hypothesizing, “guess” at the riddle, requisite for intellectual development (*i.e.*, the necessary positing of what is *not*).

Marcuse argues that thought is “purged from that ‘negative’ which loomed so large at the origins of logic and philosophic thought—the experience of the denying, deceptive, falsifying power of the established reality.”<sup>948</sup> Further,

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<sup>948</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 140.

With the elimination of this experience, the conceptual effort to sustain the tension between “is” and “ought,” and to subvert the established universe of discourse in the name of its own truth is likewise eliminated from thought which is to be objective, exact, and scientific.<sup>949</sup>

Marcuse was well aware that the authoritarian apparatus has “its own” conception of “truth” as it is proliferated throughout a populace. Ingram defines this as how “what *ought* to be is no longer clearly distinguished from what *is*. Imagination of new possibilities is increasingly truncated in favor of adaptive response.”<sup>950</sup> Of course, Peirce associated the emancipation from this form of indoctrination *with* the “scientific” method of inquiry, appealing to “objective” conditions that transcend the artificial constructs of the authority itself. Marcuse (unsurprising given his critique of technology and technological rationality) associates the false-truth of the administration *with* the “objective” and the “scientific.” However, as we noted with Peirce’s critique of positivism, it is not the bare reduction of theory to *facts* that motivates Peirce to adopt the method of inquiry but, rather, the method itself, articulated in the specific way in which he articulated it, necessarily undermines the indoctrinating effects of the authority and frees autonomous inquiry to seek objective truth. Peirce, inspired by his friend Chauncey Wright, maintained, “scientific laws do much more than summarize existing knowledge, they lead to new knowledge. This idea that the scientific method is a means for arriving at new experimental results was a starting point of Peirce’s pragmatism.”<sup>951</sup> Certainly, the authority in Peirce would claim that their truth *was* objective fact and in keeping with Marcuse’s notion of “technological rationality,” *ought* to be accepted precisely on those terms, namely, precisely because it is *presented* as objective and scientific. However, as

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<sup>949</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>950</sup> Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 80.

<sup>951</sup> Joseph Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 68.

we saw in Peirce, the *presentation* of something *as* objective and scientific (ways in which the authority can convince a populace of the apodicticity of the beliefs they seek to proliferate successfully) does not mean that those truths *are* objective and forged of an autonomous, authentic method of inquiry.

As I hinted at above, Marcuse's conception of negation in this positive sense (that is, in the sense as an engine for progress rather than a means of stagnation) was forged of his close reading of Hegel in his early years.<sup>952</sup> In *Reason and Revolution*, for example, he utilized his reading of Hegel in an attack upon positivism, illuminating the significance of negation in a manner that, though distinct, certainly anticipated its use later in *One-Dimensional Man*:

Positivism, the philosophy of common sense, appeals to the certainty of facts, but, as Hegel shows, in a world where facts do not at all present what reality can and ought to be, positivism amounts to giving up the real potentialities of mankind for a false and alien world. The positivist attack on universal concepts, on the ground they cannot be reduced to observable facts, cancels from the domain of knowledge everything that may not yet be a fact ... when [Hegel] emphasizes time and again that the universal is pre-eminent over the particular, he is struggling against limiting truth to the particular 'given.' The universal is more than the particular. This signifies in the concrete that the potentialities of men and things are not exhausted in the given forms and relations in which they actually appears; it means that men and things are all they have been and actually are, and yet more than all this. Setting the truth in the universal expressed in Hegel's conviction that no given particular form, whether in nature or society, embodies the whole truth.<sup>953</sup>

Contra the positivistic position, Hegel demonstrated that facts (the ultimate reductionistic goal of positivism) represent neither what reality *is* nor, especially, what it *ought* to be. In

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<sup>952</sup> "It is Marcuse's distinctive emphatic interpretation of Hegel that provides the essential clue for understanding what he means by negativity. We can trace this back to Marcuse's earliest writing on Hegel, but it is vividly and forcefully articulated in his first full-length book in English, *Reason and Revolution*" (Bernstein, "Negativity: Theme and Variations," *Op. Cit.*, 13).

<sup>953</sup> Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, *Op. Cit.*, 113-14.

essence, then, positivism limits, as he said, the Truth to a particular “given” and ignores entirely the potentialities inherent in the universal. What men and things *are* is not exhausted in how they appear but are over and above this through the potentialities yet to be realized. As Marcuse said, Hegel’s system “could well be called a *negative philosophy*, the name given to it by its contemporary opponents. To counteract its destructive tendencies, there are, in the decade following Hegel’s death, a positive philosophy which undertook to subordinate reason to the authority of establish fact.”<sup>954</sup> Positivism for Marcuse, in sharp contrast to the (positive) negative philosophy he saw in Hegel, merely feeding into the technical rationality of the advanced industrial society as yet one more instantiation of the “flattening” of potentialities in the sense of a reduction of alternatives to the bare “facts” of the matter. Positivism, in this Hegelian comparison, might well be said to be more “negative negativism,” the negation of the potential for negation, therefore, “positivism.” It was not a dialectical philosophy, for Marcuse, having abandoned the concept of negation and taking the completely opposing stance: rather than seeing things in their limited capacities, as what they are *not*, *all* positivism can see is the world as it is reduced to demonstrable “facts.” As Katz describes it:

*Philosophy* has likewise succumbed to the one-dimensional technological rationality, relinquishing its historical commitment to the hidden dimension of unexperienced reality (potentiality) in favour of the language, truth, and logic of the establishment. In its prevailing, neo-positivist forms, contemporary philosophy repudiates all transgression beyond empirical facts and rejects as “metaphysical” those modes of thought which negate and transcend the established universe of discourse.<sup>955</sup>

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<sup>954</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

<sup>955</sup> Katz, *Herbert Marcuse and the Art of Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 166.



Indeed, the direct association with positivism and technical rationality is appropriate for commentators, like Bernstein, who note that, for Marcuse:

The battle between negativity and positivity is the most consequential and decisive battle in the contemporary world. It is not only a battle that takes place between competing philosophical or intellectual orientations. We are threatened with the triumph of positivity which infects every aspect of culture and social reality, as positivity that reflects a basic impotence in the face of what is given, what appears as existing historical social fact. Everything Marcuse *said* and *did* was motivated by his basic desire to expose and combat the invidious consequences of positivity.<sup>956</sup>

Just as it was with technical rationality, through its myriad forms of repression, indoctrination, proliferation of technology, and demand for homogeneity, positivity “infects every aspect of culture and social reality,” placing the subject at the mercy of the objective given, pure passivity, “impotence,” without the tools nor the desire for radical social change in light of potential alternatives that are either repelled or reduced to the terms of the apparatus. Indeed, as we discussed in the previous chapter, the infiltration of technical rationality extends into the realm of higher education and infects both the “how” and “what” of university scholarship. As Rose confirms, for Marcuse, “the mollifying powers of mass culture” powerfully influence “the orientation of educational institutions.”<sup>957</sup> The role of higher education is thus of paramount importance to the conveyance of the need for, and ability to engage in, a type of negative or critical thinking that remains in sharp contrast to the positivizing thinking discussed here. As Leiss,

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<sup>956</sup> Bernstein, “Negativity: Theme and Variations,” *Op. Cit.*, 14.

<sup>957</sup> Brad Rose. “The Triumph of Social Control? A Look at Herbert Marcuse’s ‘One Dimensional Man,’ 25 Years Later,” *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 35 (1990): 55 – 68, 68.

Ober and Sherover note in their essay, “Marcuse as Teacher,” that “positive thinking ... reigns supreme in our time.”<sup>958</sup>

This way of thinking identifies truth with what exists and disdains any attempt to investigate possible alternatives to the established reality or the means by which these possibilities might be realized, denigrates reason to the level of mere manipulation of facts, and refuses to judge established conditions in the light of already existing possibilities for transcending those conditions.<sup>959</sup>

Intriguingly, Peirce’s attack on positivism took a remarkably similar trajectory. Both Marcuse and Peirce took time to critique Auguste Comte, in particular, as a paradigmatic example of all that was wrong with positivism. For Marcuse, Comte was guilty of severing “social theory from its connection with the negative philosophy and placed it in the orbit of positivism.”<sup>960</sup> The result was the transmutation of social theory from the realm of philosophy (where critical or negative thinking still had a part to play) to the purely positivistic realm of sociology that became “a science by renouncing the transcendent point of view of the philosophical critique.”<sup>961</sup> The result was unfortunate:

The concepts that explain this realm were to be derived from the facts that constitute it, while the farther-reaching implications of philosophical concepts were to be excluded. The term “positive” was a polemical term that denoted this transformation from a philosophic theory ... to be sure, Comte wished to elaborate an all-embracing *philosophy*, as the title of his principal work indicates, but it is readily visible that, in the context of positivism, philosophy means something quite different from what it meant previously, so much so that it repudiates the true content of philosophy.<sup>962</sup>

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<sup>958</sup> William Leiss, John David Ober, and Erica Sherover, “Marcuse as Teacher,” in *The Critical Spirit: Essays in Honor of Herbert Marcuse*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff and Barrington Moore, Jr. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 422.

<sup>959</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>960</sup> Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, *Op. Cit.*, 340.

<sup>961</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>962</sup> *Ibid.*, 340-41.

Peirce's concern was that the reduction to "bare facts" reduced the terms of inquiry to bare analysis rather than creative hypothetical postulation, resulting in the sort of self-perpetuating nature of the beliefs within an authoritarian system. Indeed, Peirce's entire philosophy of chance, inspired by Chauncey Wright's notion of "cosmic weather," held "against the mechanists, that there is genuine novelty in nature which no knowledge of its laws can predict or even foresee," moving Peirce far beyond the reductivist tendencies of the early positivists.<sup>963</sup> Here, too, we see a similar concern from Marcuse where "negative thinking" was excluded entirely from social analysis and replaced with the "positive" analysis of merely what *is* such that "all opposition to social realities is obliterated from philosophic discussion."<sup>964</sup>

Comte summarizes the contrast between the positivist and the philosophic theory as follows: positive sociology is to concern itself with the investigation of facts instead of with transcendental illusions, with useful knowledge instead of leisured contemplation, certainty instead of doubt and indecision, organization instead of negation and destruction. In all these cases, the new sociology is to tie itself to the facts of the existing social order and ... will exclude any move to overthrow or negate that order.<sup>965</sup>

Just as Peirce was concerned with the negation of "doubt" in the method of authority, the integral component of the ongoing movement of intellectual progress, Marcuse noted

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<sup>963</sup> Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 68. The term "cosmic weather," a bit poetical, referred, in general, to the element of chance nascent in any inquiry, inspiring Peirce's abductive facet of inquiry as "hypothesis" or "guess." Peirce made an exhaustive study of "chance" and viewed inquiry not as grasping at a binary system of apodictic certainty or complete failure in the conclusions resulting from experimental inquiry, but a scale of probability where the efficacy of one's initial beliefs (the sum-total of one's accumulated knowledge in some specific arena of inquiry that predisposes the individual to anticipate one conclusion rather than another) reduces the probability of failure, though only ever *hypothetically* dissolving it entirely. Conversely, for more speculative claims in arenas where the stock of one's knowledge is not overly expansive, the probability of failure is greater in those initial experiments but keeping with Peirce's evolutionary model of inquiry, that failure will add to the knowledge base of the inquirer, diminishing the probability of failure in successive experiments (though only ever hypothetically or ideally dissolving the probability of failure entirely).

<sup>964</sup> Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, *Op. Cit.*, 341.

<sup>965</sup> *Ibid.*

Comte's relegation of all things "negative" to the realm of speculative philosophy which, for Comte, has no place in positive "philosophy." As Anderson notes, "to Marcuse, positivism represents a theoretical counterrevolution against the heritage of Hegel and Marx."<sup>966</sup> Certainly Peirce was averse to *idle* speculation, but not to speculation itself, which was, as we have seen, a necessary part of the abductive component of inquiry itself. Peirce's advice to his students, let us not forget, was that though he must hold "fast to the string by which he controls it," so, too, must he "let his fancy take wing."<sup>967</sup> Beyond this attack on the most extreme manifestations of the movement which we explored briefly above,<sup>968</sup> Peirce took issue with the positivist's insistence on the reducibility of the ideal to the real, the thought to the act, in his thoroughgoing insistence on the cyclic nature (and dialectical interplay) between theory and practice, thought and action. Just as all thought *terminates* in action, all action instigates further cognitive

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<sup>966</sup> Kevin Anderson, "On Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory: A Critical Appreciation of Herbert Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution*, Fifty Years Later," *Sociological Theory* 11, no. 3 (Nov. 1993): 243 – 267, 251.

<sup>967</sup> Richard Robin's *Annotated Catalogue of the Papers of Charles S. Peirce* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967), R 413:264.

<sup>968</sup> In attacking Comte, Peirce notes that "Comte's own notion of a *verifiable* hypothesis was that it must not suppose anything that you are not able to directly observe" which, ridiculously, included the fact that "the same doctrine would forbid us to believe in our memory of what happened at dinnertime today," Charles S. Peirce. *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, 8 Volumes (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931 – 1936), CP 5.597. It is somewhat ironic (though only serendipitously so) that Peirce used "memory" to attack Comte's positivism. Marcuse, in his *Hegel's Ontologie* (Leipzig, 1932), 76, notes "this 'not,' this negativity which Being is, is itself never present in the sphere of immediacy, is itself not and is never *present*. This 'not' is always precisely the *other* of immediacy and the other of presence, that which is never *as present* precisely *never* is and what, however, constitutes its *Being*. This 'not,' this negativity is the immediate present always already past at every moment. The Being of present being resides therefore always already in a past, but in a, to a certain degree, 'intemporal' past (*Logic*, II, 3) in a past which still always is present and *out* of which precisely Being *is*. A being is at each moment what it is in its immediate present through memory...with the phenomenon of memory, Hegel opens the new dimension of Being which constitutes Being as authentic having-beenness (*Gewesenheit*): the dimension of essence." As Martin Jay notes, "memory, *Erinnerung*, in other words, permits access to an essential, 'negative' level of reality," Martin Jay, "Reflections on Marcuse's Theory of Remembrance," in *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*, ed. Robert Pippin, Andrew Feenberg, and Charles P. Webel (South Hadley, Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc. 1988), 31. "Memory" thus becomes a prime example of Marcuse Hegelian-inspired negative thinking, the very *opposite* of the positivism that Peirce criticized in his own invocation of the faculty of memory.

inquiry and the production of new thoughts in the developmental cycle we've explored in detail above. As he said, "if I had the choice between two hypotheses, the one more ideal and the other more materialistic, I should prefer to take the ideal one ... simply because ideas are fruitful of consequences, while mere sensations are not so; so that the idealistic hypothesis would be the *more verifiable*, that is to say, would *predict more*."<sup>969</sup> Peirce's critique of the positivistic reduction to facts is akin to Marcuse's in the sense that, like Marcuse, Peirce's philosophy was thoroughly forward-thinking and future-oriented, as indicated by everything from his "long run" theory of Truth to his exploration of the individuals within a system of authority capable of seeking the requisite doubt and tension to instigate inquiry *out of* the stagnation of the current milieu and *towards* a more autonomous society that has yet to be realized. As Feibleman notes, the positivistic position forces us "to the conception of anything which we discover in practice" and nothing more, and "to assert *a priori* that anything inconceivable" that is not represented as bare fact is "hence not in accordance with ... the true spirit of inquiry"<sup>970</sup> as Peirce defined it. In short, for both Marcuse and Peirce, the critique of positivism rests on positivism's insistence on defining terms according to what they *are* as observable and verifiable "facts," dissolving the wider inquiry which must include the *negation* (or the potential negation should need arise in the form of doubt stimulating inquiry) of those "facts," thus likewise keeping open the possibility of defining things "as they are not," the sort of negative or dialectical thinking that Marcuse contrasted with technical rationality and that Peirce insisted upon for the flourishing of the method of inquiry

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<sup>969</sup> Peirce, CP 5.598.

<sup>970</sup> James Feibleman, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Charles S. Peirce: Interpreted as a System* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1970), 291.

which never “rests” merely on observed facts but on hypotheses, tested and verified, but never absolutely, with revisability ever a live possibility.

Individuals must be *free* to engage in negative or dialectical thinking, for Marcuse, precisely the opposite of what technical rationality would have for its goal. He warned: “truth does not steadily and automatically grow out of the earlier state; it can be set free only by an *autonomous act* on the part of men,” and, further, that “the realization of freedom and reason *requires the free rationality of those who achieve it.*”<sup>971</sup> Thus, autonomy is requisite for free rationality (juxtaposed with technical rationality), and the ability to engage in negative or dialectical thinking *is* the autonomous act of the individual, to which the technological apparatus of the one-dimensional society strives to dissolve. For just as Peirce noted that free inquiry could not flourish under the dominion of the authority, Marcuse, too, insisted that “truth does not ... automatically grow out the earlier state” but it must be “set free by an autonomous act.” Indeed, it may be simplified in saying that one-dimensionality *is* the negation of negative thinking, that is the “negative” conception of negation where what is negated is *not* the stultifying effects of indoctrination but, rather, the potential to surmount those effects at all. As Kellner argues:

I interpret “one-dimensional” as a concept describing a state of affairs that conforms to existing thought and behavior in which there is the lack of a critical dimension and the dimension of alternatives and potentialities which transcend the existing society ... “one-dimensional” describes ... signifying practices that conform to pre-existing structures, norms and behavior in thought and practice; and ‘bi-dimensional’ thought which appraises values, ideas and behavior in terms of possibilities that transcend the established state of affairs. This “bi-dimensional” thought presupposes antagonism between subject and object so that the subject is free to perceive possibilities in the world that do not yet exist but which can be realized through human practice. In the one-dimensional society, the subject is assimilated into the object and follows the dictates of external,

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<sup>971</sup> Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, *Op. Cit.*, 315, 319, respectively, with emphasis my own.

objective structures, thus losing its ability to discern more liberating possibilities and to engage in transformative practice to realize them.<sup>972</sup>

What Kellner refers to here as “bi-dimensional” thought is the type of dialectical or negative thinking championed by Marcuse: one that sees beyond the positivistic facts and can compare and contrast values, ideas and behavior over a longer historical span, projecting into the future of possibilities, not merely acquiescing to the present. Bernstein notes, too, the connection between bi-dimensionality (or, as he calls it, “two-dimensionality”) and the concept of negativity. He says, within two-dimensional thought, “there is negativity, opposition, critical judgment in the tension between the demands of Reason (*Vernunft*) and the positivity of an untrue, distorted, existing social reality.”<sup>973</sup> As with Peirce, “tension” is required for the possibility of authentic truth to reemerge as an authentic (albeit asymptotically approximated) goal, a tension that is denied within the monolithic belief system forward by the authority where existing social reality is duly “distorted” by the vested interests, themselves, making the “truth” discovered by such a method nothing of the sort. Indeed, as Marcuse himself asserted: “the realization of reason is not a fact but a task.”<sup>974</sup> This is a process not reducible (as positivism would make it) to a mere fact, a “task” as exemplified in Peirce’s ongoing quest of inquiry along the “long run” of history’s unfolding. Indeed, later in his career, Marcuse already saw the radical desublimation of *what ought to be* into *what is* as “wearing thin,” with hope for emancipation from this technological rationality born of the tired, worn methods of the vested interests finally losing its grip on key parts of the populace, perhaps giving rise to

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<sup>972</sup> Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, *Op. Cit.*, 235.

<sup>973</sup> Bernstein, “Negativity: Theme and Variations,” *Op. Cit.*, 14.

<sup>974</sup> Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, *Op. Cit.*, 26.

what Peirce referred to as the individual with a “wider sort of social feeling.” As he noted:

It seems that this contradiction between that which is and that which is possible and ought to be, penetrates, in very concrete forms, the mind of the dependent population. The awareness of the irrationality of the whole adversely affects the performance of the system. The fetishism of the commodity world is wearing thin: people see the power structure behind the alleged technocracy and its blessings. Outside the small radical minorities, this awareness is still unpolitical, spontaneous; repressed time and again; “ideological”—but it also finds expression at the very base of society. In spreading wildcat strikes, in the militant strategy of factory occupations, in the attitude and demands of young workers, the protest reveals a rebellion against the *whole* of the working conditions imposed, against the *whole* performance to which one is condemned.<sup>975</sup>

Even a few years earlier, in *An Essay on Liberation*, Marcuse was already showing some optimism as to the faltering control of the technological apparatus:

Now, however, this threatening homogeneity has been loosening up, and an alternative is beginning to break into the repressive continuum. This alternative is not so much a different road to socialism as an emergence of different goals and values, different aspirations in the men and women who resist and deny the massive exploitative power of corporate capitalism even in its most comfortable and liberal realization. The Great Refusal takes a variety of forms.<sup>976</sup>

Just as Peirce demanded the rise of a class of men and women with this “wider social feeling,” Marcuse noted, too, that:

The construction of such society presupposes a type of man with a different sensitivity as well as consciousness: men who would speak a different language, have different gestures, follow different impulses; men who have developed an instinctual barrier against cruelty, brutality, ugliness.<sup>977</sup>

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<sup>975</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 21.

<sup>976</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), xvi.

<sup>977</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.



This “wider social feeling,” this “awareness,” in Marcuse’s words, “of the transcendent possibilities of freedom must become a driving power in the consciousness and the imagination which prepare the soil for this revolution.”<sup>978</sup> Thus, Marcuse was at times far more optimistic than some of his contemporaries, seeing not only the potential for radical social change in an otherwise totalizing system of control, but seeing the nascent seeds of that revolution already growing within society as it is now, with sublimation already well underway to counteract the desublimating effects of the administration.<sup>979</sup>

We see, too, Hegelian strains in Kellner’s reading of Marcuse wherein one-dimensionality sees the subsumption of the subject into the object so completely (rationality *is* technology and infiltrates every aspect of the individual’s life) that no dialectical tension requisite for constructive comparison nor even the *desire* for something distinct can ever manifest whereas, on the other hand, bi-dimensionality<sup>980</sup> presupposes a necessary and productive “tension” (the positive aspect of negation as the engine and catalyst for progress and development) between subject and object wherein the subject *retains* its autonomy. So, too, in one-dimensionality, if the “object” of Kellner’s Hegelian analogy *is* the technical base itself, there is *one* object for *all* of the

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<sup>978</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>979</sup> “This change is foreshadowed, in an ideological form, by the counterimages and countervalues with which the New Left contradicts the image of the capitalist universe. The exhibition of a noncompetitive behavior, the rejection of brutal ‘virility,’ the debunking of the capitalist productivity of work, the affirmation of the sensibility, sensuality of the body, the ecological protest, the contempt for the false heroism in outer space and colonial wars, the Women’s Liberation Movement (where it does not envisage the liberated woman merely as having an equal share in the repressive features of male prerogatives), the rejection of the anti-erotic, puritan cult of plastic beauty and cleanliness – all these tendencies contribute to the weakening of the Performance Principle. They articulate a deep malaise prevalent among the people at large” (Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *Op. Cit.*, 31).

<sup>980</sup> “Bi-dimensional” is a term utilized by Kellner to describe “thought which appraises values, ideas, and behaviour in terms of possibilities that transcend the established states of affairs” (Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984], 235). Marcuse often used the term “two-dimensional” in reference to “negating thinking,” noting, for example: “the transformation of ontological into historical dialectic retains the two-dimensionality of philosophic thought as critical, negative thinking” (Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 142).

otherwise distinct subjects that interact with it (and are ultimately subsumed into it), which clearly accounts for the homogeneity and mass mentality of the populace: each otherwise distinct subject is subsumed into the same, single object. It is only through the reestablishment of negative, dialectical thinking that autonomy and individuality may again emerge. As Bernstein notes, “the actualization of these potentialities demands the destruction, the negation, of everything that inhibits them from their full realization. It is only by negation that Reason and Freedom can be realized.”<sup>981</sup>

As we have seen, the dissolution of one-dimensionality and the fundamental alteration of the uses of technology go hand in hand, for genuine emancipation requires the dissolution of technological rationality. As Ingram insists, it must entail a “qualitative transformation of technology itself.”<sup>982</sup> Capitalism, as it manifests in advanced industrial societies especially, is incompatible with this alteration of the uses of technology. “The pacification of existence ... would require cutting back on both population and economic growth, since these latter tendencies, both inherent in the capitalist system of production, create ever-greater pollution, waste, and environmental destruction.”<sup>983</sup> In short, it would take a fundamental and radical shift of values *and* social structures. And to understand precisely how deep the problem goes, Marcuse, in *Eros and Civilization*, excavated the fundamental site of indoctrination and illuminated just how deep the technocracy infects the individual psyche.

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<sup>981</sup> Bernstein, “Negativity: Theme and Variations,” *Op. Cit.*, 15.

<sup>982</sup> Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 88.

<sup>983</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter 9

### Eros and Instinct

To reach the depths of critique that Marcuse required, as he said in *One-Dimensional Man*, the manipulation of the working class down to their very instincts, it was to psychology that Marcuse had to turn. To answer the question “in what way does industrial society, with its technical rationality, with all its indulges and indoctrinations, alter the psychological composition of the human mind?” we need, first, to understand what that mind *might otherwise be* without, after, or prior *to* the indoctrinating effects of one-dimensional society. Further, we must understand the evolving relationship between the individual and society—to what degree must the individual suppress his or her desires in order to function in civil society at all, and, further, to what degree does society influence the trajectory of the manifestation of instinctual needs? To all these questions Freud provided a stunningly comprehensive account and, as I will explore throughout this chapter, greatly influenced Marcuse’s own reading of the ways in which advanced society indoctrinates and manipulates its citizens.

“This essay employs psychological categories,” Marcuse said in the preface to the first edition of *Eros and Civilization*, “because they have *become* political categories.”<sup>984</sup> As we saw throughout the previous chapter, one of the chief consequences of the technocratic apparatus of commodity capitalism is its ability to dissolve the otherwise

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<sup>984</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), xxvii. My italics.

progressive dialectical tension between alternative modes of discourse, expression and governance, the heart of what Marcuse called “one-dimensionalizing.” This reduction of otherwise distinct realms extends, too, to the traditionally divergent realms of “inner” and “outer,” “self” and “society,” “private” and “public.” As Marks notes, “private disorder today, reflects the disorder of society as a whole; and the cure of personal disorder requires, more than ever before, a cure of the general disorder.”<sup>985</sup> Consequently, psychology can no longer be considered (if ever it could) as the realm of the purely personal and private. Merged with the outer, public society, it is now reduced to yet one more site of indoctrination and thus critical theory must follow where the problems lead.

As Marcuse said:

The traditional borderlines between psychology on the one side and political and social philosophy on the other have been made obsolete by the condition of man in the present era: formerly autonomous and identifiable psychical processes are being absorbed by the function of the individual in the state—by his public existence.<sup>986</sup>

As yet another example of the “conquest of opposites” and “desublimation,” the state apparatus extends itself into the psyche of the individual and, as such, any clear-cut distinctions between “self” and “society” are no longer tenable, if ever they were. “Psychological problems therefore turn into political problems” as “private disorder reflects more directly than before the disorder of the whole, and the cure of personal disorder depends more directly than before on the cure to the general disorder.”<sup>987</sup> As the ills of society bleed into the ills of the individual, it becomes requisite, if a “cure” is to be

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<sup>985</sup> Robert Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970), 41.

<sup>986</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, xxvii.

<sup>987</sup> *Ibid.*

found, for critical theory to delve into psychology and, conversely, for psychology to gain insights into the socio-political sphere “beyond” the individual.

There is a further complication: precisely because the technological apparatus of management and control has, as we’ve seen, extended itself into *all* walks of life through its own version of “rationality,” there is a concern that even the terms and methods utilized by psychology have succumbed to the desublimating, indoctrinating effects of the Establishment. As Marcuse said:

Psychology could be elaborated and practiced as a special discipline as long as the psyche could sustain itself against the public power, as long as privacy was real, really desired, and self-shaped; if the individual has neither the ability nor the possibility to be for himself, the terms of psychology become the terms of the societal forces which define the psyche.<sup>988</sup>

The concern, thus, is that the deployment of psychology to help the individual psyche may well simply reify the indoctrinating tendencies of the authority.<sup>989</sup> What is considered “normal” vs. “deviant,” as we have seen for example, is dictated *by* the terms of a transcendental norm that is always to the benefit of the authority’s retention of power. The very terms and language used by psychology in its efforts to emancipate and liberate may well have become “the terms of the societal forces” which have already defined the psyche, established its parameters, and created a baseline of “normalcy”

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<sup>988</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>989</sup> It should be noted that Marcuse’s choice to utilize Freud for his critical theory ran contrary to the tendencies of most of his peers in the Frankfurt School that saw Freud not as a source of emancipation but, rather, as a theorist of necessary repression that strengthened, rather than weakened, the prevailing social order, justifying domination in light of the need for toil in the face of scarcity. “Marcuse is distanced from Horkheimer and Adorno (and especially from Habermas, a second-generation member of the Frankfurt School) by his reading of Freud. Where Adorno viewed Freud entirely as a profound analyst of social manipulation of our inner cores, Marcuse treated Freud both as a perceptive critic of bourgeois repression and also as a prophet of liberation” (Ben Agger, “Marcuse’s Freudian Marxism,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 6, 4 (June, 1982): 319-41, 319). See also Theodor Adorno, “Psychology and Sociology,” *New Left Review* 46 (1967) and 47 (1968).

under which all that opposes the “normal,” namely, all that opposes the status quo (the artist, the deviant, the liberal thinker, the Peircean individual of wider social feeling) becomes the label-bearer of “Otherness” and “abnormality.”

Thus, Marcuse must proceed cautiously given the traditional reading of Freud not as a champion of emancipation but, rather, as a justifier of domination. As Agger notes:

Psychoanalysis had come to be seen by the mid-twentieth century as a repressive tool of class society. At best, Freud was a biological determinist; at worst, he was a dangerous metaphysician who in later books like *Civilization and its Discontents* “justified” heightened repression in defense of capitalism ... Marcuse thus had first to show that “his” Freud was a dialectical theorists of instincts and not a simplistic and ultimately malevolent reductionist.<sup>990</sup>

Rather than beginning with an *a priori*<sup>991</sup> acceptance of the terms of psychology in his analysis, Marcuse began in an opposite fashion: developing “the political and sociological substance of the psychological notions.”<sup>992</sup> We have already seen a manifestation of this with his reformulation of the psychological term “sublimation,” becoming, in essence, the opposite of its normal utilization given the structure of the advanced industrial society. As such, though Freud was a profound influence, Marcuse amended and altered Freud on numerous occasions given Marcuse’s unique Marxian background, fusing Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxism into something truly novel.

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<sup>990</sup> Agger, “Marcuse’s Freudian Marxism,” *Op. Cit.*, 320.

<sup>991</sup> Despite Marcuse’s claim to begin critically, he does, in fact, accept without much critical analysis many of the basic suppositions of Freud before embarking on his investigation. Although he does, as we’ll see, make many changes and alterations, “it should be made clear ... that in the development of his interpretation of Freudian theory, Marcuse accepts uncritically the conceptual devices introduced by Freud. Among these are an ‘unconscious,’ a generalized love instinct (Eros), a generalized instinct for destruction (death instinct, or Thanatos)” (Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse, Op. Cit.*, 43).

<sup>992</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization, Op. Cit.*, xxviii.

Just as he attempted to excavate a revolutionary theme in Hegel from out of a traditionally conservative shell, Marcuse embarked on a complementary project with Freud.<sup>993</sup> As Robinson notes:

Marcuse's purpose in *Eros and Civilization* was to demonstrate that beneath the apparent pessimism and conservatism of Freud's thought was an underlying critical tendency—Marcuse called it “the hidden trend in psychoanalysis”—which contained both a crushing indictment of the established civilization and a promise of ultimate liberation. He proposed to reverse the prevailing interpretation of Freud which took as the central message of psychoanalysis the notion that civilization was necessarily repressive.<sup>994</sup>

By marrying Freud's psychoanalytic theory to the socio-historical evolution of economic and political coordinations in civilization,<sup>995</sup> Marcuse saw that by Freud's own terms, despite Freud's pessimism to the contrary, civilization does *not*, in fact, necessitate anything more than the bare minimum sort of repression and pleasure deferral, moving him closer to his utopian<sup>996</sup> view of an aesthetic dimension where the artistic and the erotic are freed from their confining mores and dissolve the technical rationality of indoctrination and alienation that represent the modern milieu. As Marks notes:

Culture has brought with it consequences that negate its advantages. Among these are concentration camps, world wars, and atom bombs. These, Marcuse argues, are not relapses into barbarism. They are outgrowths of modern science and technology. They occur at the height of civilization. If these negative facts which threaten to destroy civilization

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<sup>993</sup> As Elliot notes, “Marcuse seeks to unfold the liberative potential in Freud's work from the inside out, in order to reveal its radical political edge” (Anthony Elliot, *Social Theory Since Freud: Traversing Social Imaginaries* [New York: Routledge, 2004], 31). On Hegel, see Chapter Six of the current project.

<sup>994</sup> Paul Robinson, *The Freudian Left* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1969), 195-96. His inner quotation is from Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 11.

<sup>995</sup> Marx was “clearly the unacknowledged hero of *Eros and Civilization*” and though Marcuse “never mentioned Marx's name in the book,” nothing less than “an extraordinary feat of legerdemain,” nevertheless, “the underlying tactic of *Eros and Civilization* was to bring Freudian theory into line with the categories of Marxism. This endeavor did not result in the reduction of Freud to Marx; Marcuse honestly felt that psychoanalysis opened up dimensions of criticism unanticipated in Marxian theory” (*Ibid*, 201).

<sup>996</sup> “The utility of Freudian psychoanalysis is, on the one hand, to explain why domination has penetrated so deeply and so effectively into our inner beings; on the other hand, Marcuse reads Freud as a utopian who points beyond this mobilization” (Agger, “Marcuse's Freudian Marxism,” *Op. Cit.*, 319).

are the essence of civilization itself, then Freud's point about the price of civilization is meaningless. The sacrifices serve no purpose. Happiness is given up not in the production of a better society, but of a society that destroys itself.<sup>997</sup>

In essence, *Eros and Civilization* offers us a close-up of the predominant themes Marcuse would later render explicit in *One-Dimensional Man*. So much hinged, in that later text, on technical rationality's ability to permeate into *all* walks of life, effectively closing off the potential for radical social change through the dissolution of negative thinking; to keep individuals complacent in the face of indoctrination and alienation by peppering them with enough euphoric indulgences to pacify them against the desire for radical social change which might otherwise bring about a genuine sort of happiness in autonomy. This is the ingression of technical rationality into the realm of desires: individuals within such societies are influenced as to what they ought to desire (false needs) and when these desires are fulfilled to the advantage of market capitalism and commodity fetishism, the requisite euphoria to pacify a populace washes over them, effectively perpetuating the status quo and guarding against revolutionary change. The desire *for* change is negated, as are the tools to achieve it ("negative" or "critical" thinking). As he noted in the later "political preface" to *Eros and Civilization* in 1966, "the very forces which rendered society capable of pacifying the struggle for existence served to repress in the individuals the need for such a liberation."<sup>998</sup> The authorities do not need to "justify their dominion" precisely because they "deliver the goods" and "satisfy the sexual and the aggressive energy of their subjects" through the perpetuation of goods and services that the major corporations created in the first place and profit

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<sup>997</sup> Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 42.

<sup>998</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, xi.



precisely because they have successfully created the desire for the goods and services that they then “deliver.”<sup>999</sup>

Further, since technical rationality is, as we have seen, all-pervasive, and extends into all avenues of life, even leisure, the entire psychological make-up of the human organism must “be adapted” to the milieu of “uninterrupted production and consumption of waste, gadgets, planned obsolescence, and means of destruction.”<sup>1000</sup> The avenues of the libidinal satisfaction have been commodified to the benefit of the corporations and, too, the avenues aggression have likewise been mustered to the benefit of the Establishment and the prevalent social order, dictating who the “Enemy” is “who has to be fought and hated,” namely, whatever is antagonistic to the status quo.<sup>1001</sup> Combined, avenues of love and hate, life and death, are all streamlined to mitigate against radical social change and perpetuate the agenda of the invested interests. Effectively, the Reality Principle, the Freudian conception of the ego-governed description of reality that demands the deferral of the instant gratification desired by the id, is a reality constructed by the invested interests and dictated by capital and commodity: citizens are conditioned to defer their libidinal drives in manners conducive to corporations benefit in a way that obfuscates the indoctrinating means and agendas of those in power.<sup>1002</sup> As he said:

Mass democracy provides the political paraphernalia for effectuating this introjection of the Reality Principle; it not only permits the people (up to a

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<sup>999</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

<sup>1000</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1001</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1002</sup> “According to Freud, the history of man is the history of repression. Culture constrains not only his societal but also his biological existence, not only parts of the human being but his instinctual structure itself ... such constraint is the very precondition of progress. Left free to pursue their natural objectives, the basic instincts of man would be incompatible with all lasting association and preservation: they would destroy even there they unite. The uncontrolled Eros is just as fatal as his deadly counterpart, the death instinct. Their destructive force derives from the fact that they strive for a gratification which culture cannot grant: gratification as such and as an end in itself, at any moment. The instincts must therefore be deflected from their goal, inhibited in their aim” (*Ibid.*, 11).

point) to chose their own masters and to participate (up to a point) in the government which governs them—it also allows the masters to disappear behind the technological veil of the productive and destructive apparatus which they control, and it conceals the human (and material) costs of the benefits and comforts which it bestows upon those who collaborate. The people, efficiently manipulated and organized, are free; ignorance and impotence, introjected heteronomy is the price of their freedom.<sup>1003</sup>

This “euphoria in unhappiness” masks the alienation and indoctrination and the mirage of having some say in the matter of creating the Reality Principle through a nominal amount of permitted freedom and participation in governance is enough to pacify the populace and perpetuate the myth of autonomy. “This union of freedom and servitude has become ‘natural’ and a vehicle of progress,” for “it makes no sense to talk about liberation to free men.”<sup>1004</sup> Under the misapprehension we have a controlling share in the creation of the Reality Principle combined with the euphoria that permeates a society who are “delivered the goods,” the tools and desire for negative thinking, the ability to consider alternative possibilities, is effectively negated.

Marcuse took Freud’s fundamental relationship between satisfaction deferral and civilization at face value, namely, “that civilization is based on the permanent subjugation of the human instincts” and that “free gratification of man’s instinctual needs is incompatible with civilized society: renunciation and delay in satisfaction are the prerequisites of progress” and, indeed, of civilization itself.<sup>1005</sup> Yet, Marcuse noted a peculiar manifestation of this Reality Principle in the unique composition of the advanced

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<sup>1003</sup> *Ibid.*, xii–xiii.

<sup>1004</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv and xiii, respectively.

<sup>1005</sup> *Ibid.*, 3. “The origin of civilization from Freud’s perspective is linked to the renunciation of strong drives. Culture involves a frustration of strong drives by suppression, repression, and other psychological mechanisms. For Freud, an intrinsic antagonism exists between individual liberty and the satisfaction of primary drives on the one hand, and the development of civilization on the other. Both drive satisfaction and the urge for freedom are restricted in civilization” (Edward Hyman, “Eros and Freedom: The Critical Psychology of Herbert Marcuse,” in *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia* [Boston: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1988], 143).

technological society: “intensified progress seems to be found up with intensified unfreedom.”<sup>1006</sup> Oddly, “the most effective subjugation and destruction of man by man takes place at the height of civilization, when the material and intellectual attainments of mankind seem to allow the creation of a truly free world.”<sup>1007</sup> Technical rationality’s ability to diminish scarcity and combat disease, to reach greater and greater heights of knowledge and truth, instead of ushering in an age of peace and prosperity has achieved quite the opposite, for “repressiveness is ... more vigorously maintained the more unnecessary it becomes.”<sup>1008</sup> We repress our libidinal needs in order to work together to combat scarcity and coexist peaceably and thus it *ought* to follow that the *more* technology is capable of achieving these beneficent goals, the *less* we *ought* to repress the drives that *are* repressed only so that we can achieve those ends. Although a modicum of repression and satisfaction deferral is always necessary, the peculiar affect of the technological age is that the less we need to engage in repression and deferral, the more it is demanded of us. For although Freud, himself, was skeptical of a truly non-repressive society, Marcuse saw in Freud’s own theory the seeds of this possibility and, through his critical theory, the reasons for its deferral at the mercy of capital and commodity: “Freud’s own theory provides reasons for rejecting his identification of civilization with repression,” for “the very achievements of repressive civilization seem to create the preconditions for the gradual abolition of repression.”<sup>1009</sup> The more technological society advances the less we need to be governed by repression and yet the more repression there

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<sup>1006</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*., *Op. Cit.*, 4.

<sup>1007</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1008</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1009</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5, respectively.

seems to be, a kind of “surplus repression” conducive to the perpetuation of corporate interests but antagonistic to genuine human autonomy. As Hyman explains:

The bourgeois notion of progress as a more or less uninterrupted ascent toward greater freedom from necessity has been increasingly debunked in the ashes of two world wars, concentration camps, genocide, the prevailing threat of thermonuclear warfare, and more fundamentally by the increasing, sustained, and nearly omnipresent social immiseration of everyday life.<sup>1010</sup>

In *One-Dimensional Man*, we noted that what individuals “desire” is, likewise, what they “value”—a universe of values created by technical rationality’s integration into commodity and capital. In a universe of needs not of our own making, the avenues for satisfaction deferral are created by the invested interests to their benefit, and universally proliferated, that is, what is desired and valued by others we, individually, come to desire and value ourselves. This is the origin of the “mass mentality” and heteronomy at the heart of one-dimensional society and echoes Peirce’s concern that the authority creates the beliefs for a populace universally such that all individuals believe (desire, value) the same things and thus the tension borne of disagreement is alleviated so as to ensure peace and the perpetuation of those in power. As Marcuse said, “the reality which shapes the instincts as well as their needs and satisfaction is a socio-historical world ... affecting not only the instinctual aims but also the instinctual ‘values.’”<sup>1011</sup> Historically, “the unrestrained pleasure principle comes into conflict with the natural and human environment.”<sup>1012</sup> But, as we noted in *One-Dimensional Man*, the “conquest of opposites” inherent in technical rationality’s dissolution of dialectical thinking one-dimensionalizes

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<sup>1010</sup> Hyman, “Eros and Freedom: The Critical Psychology of Herbert Marcuse,” in *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*, *Op. Cit.*, 145.

<sup>1011</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 12.

<sup>1012</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

even this dichotomy, as the distinction between what one is permitted to have and what one *can* have is minimized to the point of obscurity: the euphoric indulgences are omnipresent and aid in keeping the populace pacified and unwilling to engage in a radical sort of social change that would threaten the continuation of those indulgences.

Nevertheless, although it may appear that repression is minimized in the face of this reduction of what one is permitted to indulge and the accessibility of those indulges, the avenues of indulgence and the deferral of instant gratification is still conditioned *by* the major corporations as they continue to create the desires for what must be profitably sold in conjunction with technical rationality's conditioning of what we ought to value. "The reality principle materializes in a system of institutions. And the individual, growing up within such a system, learns the requirements of the reality principle as those of law and order, and transmits them to the next generation."<sup>1013</sup> As Ocaý explains:

Central to Freud's theory of instincts, as Marcuse reconstructs it, is the idea that there is an inherent antagonism between the satisfaction of human instincts and individual freedom on the one hand and the development of civilization on the other. For Freud, this antagonism is an antagonism between individual and cultural demands, or sexuality and civilization. And in order for civilization to thrive the demands of the human instincts must be constantly held in check by some socially useful norms.<sup>1014</sup>

However, as Marcuse noted throughout his career, what are considered "socially useful norms" are dictated by capital, commodity and the invested interests that profit and endure precisely because *they* are the ones who dictate what is "normal" and what is "useful." As such, the antagonism is further complicated: it is not merely between individual freedom and civilization but, precisely because "civilization" *is* the demands

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<sup>1013</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>1014</sup> Jeffry Ocaý, "Eroticizing Marx, Revolutionizing Freud: Marcuse's Psychoanalytic Turn," *Kritike* 3, no. 1 (June 2009): 1-21, 12.

of technical rationality in all its oppressive indoctrination and commodity fetishism, individual freedom becomes pitted against the peculiarly alienating and pacifying modes of the advanced industrial society.

Further, Marcuse noted that individuals “grow up” in such a milieu and this is a profound point that must not be glossed over. As Peirce noted, and the studies of the Frankfurt School later corroborated, effective indoctrination into a system of institutions and their values is best served by aiming such indoctrination at the young who are raised into a universe of desires and needs such that they know of no alternative, are denied the effective “negative” or “critical” thinking to learn other than they have, and then pass along those values to the next generation and the system perpetuates itself to the benefit of the invested interests. Prior to this indoctrination of the young, however, the instincts are free, not yet sublimated, not yet repressed, and it is the recollection, inherent in all men and women, that Marcuse saw as a potential site of emancipation in adulthood. “In the remembrance of infantile desires Marcuse finds one of the greatest resources for adult liberation.”<sup>1015</sup> The infantile desires, prior to their integration into technical rationality, are a potential cite for emancipation if the indoctrinating effects of forced sublimation and repression can be dissolved. As Marcuse noted, this infantile experience “continues to haunt the mind; it preserves the memory of past stages of individual development at which integral gratification is obtained.”<sup>1016</sup> Thus, memory plays an integral role in the potential emancipation of the instincts and the transcendence of the seemingly all-pervasive nature of technical rationality, “first against deeply internalized domination (false needs) and then against class society as a whole. Memory comes to perform the

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<sup>1015</sup> Agger, “Marcuse’s Freudian Marxism,” *Op. Cit.*, 320.

<sup>1016</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 17.

function of a transcendent culture.”<sup>1017</sup> In coming to perform the function of a “transcendent culture,” a transcendence above or beyond the established norm, this conditions a type of “negative thinking” which, with this Freudian reading, is inherent within individuals prior *to* a more developed, more conditioned form of negative thinking gained later in life through non-indoctrinating forms of higher education. From a Peircean perspective, it becomes even more fascinating: the “wider social feeling” of the individuals capable of transcending the established discourse of authority is, in part, a recollection of a point in time not prior *to* one’s own existence (previous administrations and social structures) but to the nascent forms *of* one’s own existence. As Marcuse said:

The psychoanalytic liberation of memory explodes the rationality of the repressed individual. As cognition gives way to re-cognition, the forbidden images and impulses of childhood begin to tell the truth that reason denies ... the rediscovery of the past yields critical standards which are tabooed by the present. Moreover, the restoration of memory is accompanied by the restoration of the cognitive content of phantasy. Psychoanalytic theory removes these mental faculties from the noncommittal sphere of day dreaming and fiction and recaptures their strict truths. The weight of these discoveries must eventually shatter the framework in which they were made and confined. The liberation of the past does not end in its reconciliation with the present. Against the self-imposed restraint of the discoverer, the orientation of the past tends toward an orientation on the future. The *recherche du temps perdu* becomes the vehicle of future liberation.<sup>1018</sup>

Just as Peirce noted, the “past yields critical standards which are tabooed by the present,” as Marcuse says here, standards asynchronous with the established norms of the *status quo* and thus a site of tension and fruitful comparison to bring about the negative thinking requisite for radical social change. Marcuse, via Freud, noted that such emancipatory potential of conjuring the past may be found *within* the lived past of the individuals

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<sup>1017</sup> Agger, “Marcuse’s Freudian Marxism,” *Op. Cit.*, 322.

<sup>1018</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 18.

themselves from a previous age of development prior to the onset of indoctrination, sublimation and repression.

However, Marcuse was not advocating a return to a prior state of civilization, as we saw with his critique of pre-Industrial Puritanism. Memory is not a vehicle to *return to* a prior state of the past but, rather, is a vehicle that bears upon “future liberation” as he said here. As Agger notes, “Marcuse here links memory to the liberating function of phantasy ... phantasy grounded in the memory of infantile gratifications can show us the way beyond the present reality principle that subordinates gratification to a strict regimen of surplus labour and surplus consumption.”<sup>1019</sup> The role of “phantasy,” the imagination, is tied to the function of memory in terms of its liberating potential: a kind of negative thinking that permits the individual to imagine what is *other*. “Phantasy does not, however, dwell within the infantile but is a resource for mature planning of a different civilizational order. Marcuse here prefigures his views on the emancipatory function of art,” which will be the central focus of our next chapter.<sup>1020</sup> In terms of Marcuse’s Freudian analysis, of central issue here, he notes:

Freud’s metapsychology here restores imagination to its rights. As a fundamental, independent mental process, phantasy has a truth value of its own, which corresponds to an experience of its own—namely, the surmounting of the antagonistic human reality. Imagination envisions the reconciliation of the individual with the whole, of desire with realization, of happiness with reason.<sup>1021</sup>

In effect, reality itself (in terms of the reality principle) is generated socio-historically through the method of authority, negating the ability to engage in radical free inquiry, in what technical rationality demands is the efficient, advanced, progressive and

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<sup>1019</sup> Agger, “Marcuse’s Freudian Marxism,” *Op. Cit.*, 322.

<sup>1020</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1021</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 33.



civilized. This resonates with Peirce since, as I demonstrated, beliefs *do* construct reality, to no small degree, whether they are the beliefs proliferated by authority or the beliefs forged of authentic inquiry. Thus, “if absence from repression is the archetype of freedom,” freedom not to indulge in the instant gratification of the id but to be freed *from* the chaos and destruction that an unbound Eros would conjure, “then civilization is the struggle against this freedom,” a civilization conditioned, for Marcuse, by technical rationality which is synonymous with one-dimensionality.<sup>1022</sup> In sum, civilization *is* the efficiency and progressiveness of the advanced industrial society and, as such, despite the nominal sense of “freedom” it allows its citizens to engage in, its ultimate goal is to overcome the absolute freedom found in a non-repressive milieu.

However, “the fact that the reality principle has to be re-established continually in the development of man indicates that its triumph over the pleasure principle is never complete and never secure.”<sup>1023</sup> As Agger notes, “the psychoanalytic model of personality explains why false consciousness and false needs persist and at the same time why their hold on interiority can never be total, thus holding open the prospect of eventual liberation.”<sup>1024</sup> Further:

This structure of personality is such as to guarantee that there is never complete cooptation of the person by the social system for residues of libido always remain. And this for Marcuse is the emancipatory resource for which he had been searching in the 1930s ... at last, Marcuse found in the objective character of human subjectivity, our instinctual core, a barricade against total mobilization. But he also found a new wellspring of deep domination. The plasticity of our biological structures allows us to be more deeply manipulated. The layer of instinct thus constitutes an inner barrier against the eradication of bourgeois interiority, a type of inner

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<sup>1022</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 15.

<sup>1023</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1024</sup> Agger, “Marcuse’s Freudian Marxism,” *Op. Cit.*, 319 – 320.

second dimension that replaces bourgeois culture with dynamic potential of resistance and transcendence.<sup>1025</sup>

Throughout Marcuse's *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, he noted the various ways, historically, the Establishment had countered the revolutionary tendencies of its populace by adapting to changing socio-historic circumstances, finding new ways to indoctrinate and pacify its populace into acquiescence. As Peirce noted, not even the authority had the ability to militate against *all* changes in beliefs but, most importantly, at least the ones that do not undermine its hold on power. The invested interests are adaptable to changing circumstances, altering the values, beliefs and avenues in which individuals defer their pleasure so long as all roads continue to lead to the perpetuation of their hold on power. As we noted in our previous chapters, the adaptability of the individual, as an organism struggling to survive in its social environment, is the turn to conformity, heteronomy, efficiency and homogeneity, for those are the terms dictated by the invested interests for the individual's flourishing within the confines of technical rationality. As Marcuse said, "the struggle against freedom reproduces itself in the psyche of man, as the self-repression of the repressed individual, and his self-repression in turn sustains his masters and their institutions."<sup>1026</sup> Thus, this conformity to the socio-historically conditioned reality principles is conditioned by, as Freud himself notes, "the eternal primordial struggle for existence."<sup>1027</sup> This becomes "the most effective rationalization for repression," namely, that repression is demanded by civilization for the survival of the individual organisms within that socio-historical environment.<sup>1028</sup> Marcuse's critical

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<sup>1025</sup> *Ibid.*, 321 – 322.

<sup>1026</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 16.

<sup>1027</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*

<sup>1028</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

theory, exemplified in *One-Dimensional Man*, added the further point that “civilization” had become synonymous with the values and structure of technical rationality which, in turn, perpetuates and is perpetuated by invested interests who dictate the avenues of deferred gratification, create the Reality Principle conducive to their own ends, and interject the values, desires and beliefs that reify their agendas.

Although, as Marcuse suggested, “the ultimate relationship between Eros and Thanatos remains obscure,” it can be outlined in general terms: “at the earliest stage of its development, Freud’s theory is built around the antagonism between sex (libidinous) and ego (self-preservation) instincts; at the latest stage, it is centered on the conflict between the *life instincts (Eros)* and the *death instinct*.”<sup>1029</sup> Marcuse said, however, that Freud was driven by his theory “to emphasize time and again the common nature of the instincts prior to their differentiation.”<sup>1030</sup> Something perhaps more fundamental than either *Eros* or *Thanatos* is a “*regressive* or ‘conservative’ tendency in all instinctual life.”<sup>1031</sup> This conservative tendency, Freud suspected, may be universal in all organic life, namely, “a compulsion inherent in all organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces.”<sup>1032</sup> This tendency has a profound bearing on the notion of “equilibrium” which is “ultimately regression behind life itself.”<sup>1033</sup> As external stimuli disturb the organism from out of its equilibrium, a state of comfort without tension or turmoil, the organism is naturally compelled to seek out, based on this fundamental drive, “an earlier state of things” prior

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<sup>1029</sup> *Ibid.*, 27, 22, respectively.

<sup>1030</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>1031</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>1032</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1950), 47. Cited in Marcuse, *Ibid.*

<sup>1033</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 25.

to the problematic situation, namely, back to equilibrium itself. We may note an eerie resonance with Peirce who noted that the human organism is naturally compelled to instigate inquiry the moment a problematic situation occurs, stimulated by the excitation of the external world, in order to find a state of equilibrium once more. For Peirce, however, this process was always progressive: for every doubt and problem experienced, inquiry drives the organism to greater heights of knowledge and stronger forms of equilibrium having incorporated the problem and its solution forged of inquiry into its conceptual matrix. Alternatively, the organism could hide from such excitations (the method of tenacity) and thus retain its equilibrium that, as Peirce noted, invariably failed to shield the organism from doubt in the long run.

As O'Carroll notes:

*Eros*, whose elemental goal is the preservation of life, and *Thanatos*, whose primary goal is the destruction of life, are the two mechanisms immanent within the human psyche that man uses in the process of releasing tension. *Eros* does it through the immediate satisfaction of sexual desires, while *Thanatos* does it through destruction or death.<sup>1034</sup>

According to Freud, these two drives, primal and universal, must be subjugated to the demands of society for civilization to exist at all. In no small part, this is due to the reality of *Ananke*, or "scarcity." As Marcuse notes:

Behind the reality principle lies the fundamental fact of *Ananke* or scarcity (*Lebensnot*), which means that the struggle for existence takes place in a world too poor for the satisfaction of human needs without constant restraint, renunciation, delay. In other words, whatever satisfaction is possible necessitates *work*, more or less painful arrangements and undertakings for the procurement of the means for satisfying needs.<sup>1035</sup>

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<sup>1034</sup> O'Carroll, "Eroticizing Marx, Revolutionizing Freud: Marcuse's Psychoanalytic Turn," *Op. Cit.*, 12-13

<sup>1035</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 35.

Thus, in a world governed by scarcity, where there is not enough material and food to provide for a populace without demanding labor “for the procurement of the means for satisfying” those needs, it is all the more important that civilization, for it to exist at all, find ways to divert the instinctual drives of the individual into avenues that are useful for the provision of such goods. As Marks reminds us, scarcity motivates repression, for “there is not enough of the world’s goods to go around; pleasure does not produce food or shelter; work is unavoidable.”<sup>1036</sup> In a world governed by scarcity, such restraint and sublimation are *necessary* for survival.<sup>1037</sup>

And yet, such a state of scarcity bears little resemblance to the milieu of the advanced one-dimensional society. As Marcuse noted throughout *One-Dimensional Man*, and throughout the new preface to *Eros and Civilization*, the vested interests “deliver the goods.”<sup>1038</sup> Individuals *are*, in fact, satisfied by the goods and services proliferated by the administration—all, except the outlying minorities that Marcuse considered in greater detail throughout *Counterrevolution and Revolt*.<sup>1039</sup> Thus, in the age of scarcity, once a justifiable reason for repression and sublimation of our instinctual drives, the deferral of immediate satisfaction for the perpetuation and survival of the community as a whole,<sup>1040</sup> has come to an end within the advanced technological milieu, why does repression

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<sup>1036</sup> Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 44.

<sup>1037</sup> “Chief among the environmental variables that condition the prevailing repressive organization of the instincts is the brute fact of material need, Ananke, the condition of scarcity that has dominated the world history of civilized society has dictated that a considerable part of the instinctual (libidinal) endowment of the population be diverted from enjoyment into productive labor” (Barry Katz, *Herbert Marcuse and the Art of Liberation* [London: Verso, 1982], 150).

<sup>1038</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, xii.

<sup>1039</sup> These minorities who are *not*, in fact, satisfied by the goods and services offered by the administration are a cite of radical social change, for Marcuse, since the apparatus of commodity fetishism and technical rationality fails to provide the euphoria requisite for their overall complacency. Considering the fact that *Eros and Civilization* and *One-Dimensional Man* were written at the height of the Civil Arts movement, there is no doubt much of this discussion is at the foreground of Marcuse’s thought at the time.

<sup>1040</sup> “This work is of necessity in opposition to erotic instincts, and so a repression of libido, because a direct libidinal fulfillment comes in the way of efficient work” (O’Day, “Eroticizing Marx, Revolutionizing Freud: Marcuse’s Psychoanalytic Turn,” *Op. Cit.*, 14).

continue to *increase* rather than *decrease*? As Marks notes, “of direct concern are the effects of repression. Modern civilization is marked by a paradox. Having conquered nature to the degree that most human wants could be satisfied, it has less and less need for repression.”<sup>1041</sup> Nevertheless, it is here, “at the height of civilization,” that Marcuse noted “the most effective subjugation and destruction of man by man takes place ... when the material and intellectual attainments of mankind seem to allow the creation of a truly free world.”<sup>1042</sup> For as Marks explains, the contrary tendency unfolds: “the more unnecessary the need for repression, the more vigorously it is imposed.”<sup>1043</sup>

It is here where Marcuse’s Marxism comes to the fore and compels him to make two critical amendments to Freud’s fundamental thesis: “the performance principle” and “surplus repression.” For the “central point in Marcuse’s general position was that Freud had revealed the inherent conflicts of the instincts—with one another and with the constraints of the external world—but by failing adequately to distinguish between the biological and the historical, he had defused an explosive theory.”<sup>1044</sup> In short, Freud failed to critically assess the changing socio-historical milieu in which the instincts are pitted against civilization, not in general, but in specific iterations, especially the milieu of the advanced industrial society. In a way, this is similar to Marcuse’s amendments to Marx, himself, who likewise failed to provide a critical social psychology of the working class within advanced capitalism, thereby failing to anticipate the euphoric indulges that staves off the radical social change Marx envisioned. It was not enough to address the

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<sup>1041</sup> Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse, Op. Cit.*, 41.

<sup>1042</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization, Op. Cit.*, 4.

<sup>1043</sup> Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse, Op. Cit.*, 41.

<sup>1044</sup> Katz, *Herbert Marcuse and the Art of Liberation, Op. Cit.*, 149.

biological aspects of instinct, for Marcuse, but the socio-historic, as well. As Hyman insists:

Fundamental consideration must be focused on the material and historical context of social reality, the relationship of social theories to both the subjective and objective expressions of this reality, and the possible contributions of psychoanalysis to the practical project of a critical social elimination of the antagonism between generalized social will and individual desire established in the social practice of developing a liberatory society.<sup>1045</sup>

Thus, through the elucidation of what Marcuse called “the performance principle” and “surplus repression,” critical amendments to Freud’s theory which account for the socio-historical and not merely the biological, “Marcuse attempts to reactivate such explosive theory by unraveling the socio-historical aspect of the instincts.”<sup>1046</sup>

Marcuse defined “surplus repression” as “the restrictions necessitated by social domination” which is “distinguished from (basic) *repression*: the ‘modifications’ of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization.”<sup>1047</sup> Surplus repression, distinguished from repression as such, is the peculiar manifestation of repression in the most advanced forms of civilization: it is the unique occurrence of *more* repression when, with the reduction of scarcity to obscurity, there ought to be *less*.<sup>1048</sup> Moreover, “Marcuse’s terminology clearly revealed that surplus repression was meant to be identified with Marx’s surplus value—that is, the *quantitative* measure of human exploitation under capitalism.”<sup>1049</sup>

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<sup>1045</sup> Hyman, “Eros and Freedom: The Critical Psychology of Herbert Marcuse,” *Op. Cit.*, 144-45.

<sup>1046</sup> Ocas, “Eroticizing Marx, Revolutionizing Freud: Marcuse’s Psychoanalytic Turn,” *Op. Cit.*, 18.

<sup>1047</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 35.

<sup>1048</sup> “Marcuse introduces the notion of surplus repression, which he differentiates from the more basic Freudian notion of repression, by delineating surplus repression as the biologically unnecessary restriction imposed by social (*i.e.* class) domination” (Hyman, “Eros and Freedom: The Critical Psychology of Herbert Marcuse,” *Op. Cit.*, 151).

<sup>1049</sup> Robinson, *The Freudian Left*, *Op. Cit.*, 203.

Marcuse's complementary concept of the "performance principle" he defined as "the prevailing historical form of the *reality principle*."<sup>1050</sup> Amending Freud's traditional concept that the pleasure principle gives way to the reality principle for civilization to endure, and all the repression of instincts, sublimation of desires and deferred gratification that entails. Again, as with surplus repression, the performance principle is the peculiar occurrence exclusively found in the most advanced forms of society: it is how the reality principle is manifest in the modern, capitalistic milieu of the one-dimensional society.<sup>1051</sup> As Elliot notes, "what Freud did not see, Marcuse argues, is that capitalism creates a crippling (though impermanent) burden of repression. From this angle, individuals are in fact adapting to the destructive forces of capitalist domination, forces that masquerade as the 'reality principle'."<sup>1052</sup>

It is clear enough how the two are mutually complementary.<sup>1053</sup> Within the unique composition of the advanced technological epoch, repression endures over and above what is requisite in earlier forms of civilization in a cultural milieu (the reality principle) unique to that socio-historical setting. As I argue elsewhere, "in advanced industrial societies the relatively complex movement from pleasure principle to reality principle is insufficient to account for what takes place on the instinctual level of its citizens."<sup>1054</sup> The fundamental Freudian formula no longer makes sense: if scarcity is the foundation for

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<sup>1050</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 35.

<sup>1051</sup> "These excessive controls particular to the agencies and institutions of domination of a particular society are dubbed surplus repression by Marcuse. The reality principle that prevails in contemporary society, that which maintains the surplus repression of our collective and individual realities, has been called the performance principle by Marcuse" (Hyman, "Eros and Freedom: The Critical Psychology of Herbert Marcuse," *Op. Cit.*, 151).

<sup>1052</sup> Elliot, *Social Theory Since Freud: Traversing Social Imaginaries*, *Op. Cit.*, 32.

<sup>1053</sup> "The performane principle is the counterpart of surplus repression" (Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 46).

<sup>1054</sup> Clancy Smith, "A Critical Pragmatism: Marcuse, Adorno, and Peirce on the Artificial Stagnation of Individual Development in Advanced Industrial Societies," *Kritike* 3, no. 2 (December 2009): 34-56, 41.



repression, the alleviation of scarcity should entail the nullification of the need for repression, and the fundamental Freudian thesis that repression is *necessary* for civilization is called into question. As Macintyre notes:

The form of the distribution of work have always been imposed upon me, and the forms of repression necessary to maintain them represent an overplus beyond what is necessary for civilization. Furthermore, as technical and material progress removes the obstacles which scarcity placed in the path of civilized development, repression is more and more surplus to the task of maintain civilization.<sup>1055</sup>

Thus, Freud's traditional conception of the reality principle is insufficient to account for the peculiar occurrence of repression in an age without scarcity.

To claim that it is the reality principle which demands repression Marcuse retorts that we confused the demands of the reality principle with the demands which some particular form of social domination seeks to impose in the name of reality. That we should perform our social tasks in an allotted order and hierarchy is not a prescription of reality as such; the principle embodied in this prescription is what Marcuse calls the performance principle.<sup>1056</sup>

Reality "as such," as embodied in the reality principle in terms of a necessary amount of repression for civilization's survival, is invalidated when the *reasons* for that repression are negated or diminished, at least, substantially. The fact that repression not only endures but multiplies demanded a new principle: a performance principle that describes the reality of social domination in an era where the prior terms of repression no longer hold.

For Marcuse, following from Freud, human history can be divided into two basic epochs, the pre-industrial and post-industrial world:

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<sup>1055</sup> Alisdair Macintyre, *Herbert Marcuse: An Exposition and a Polemic* (New York: The Viking Press, 1970), 48-49.

<sup>1056</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

Up through the modern age, a certain amount of repression and social domination was necessary to confront *Ananke*, this scarcity, and provide the technological substructures required for abundance. But in the second phase, the age of the advanced in industrial society, the repression of the pleasure principle has become needlessly repressive, excessively so, a 'surplus repression.'<sup>1057</sup>

As Marks notes, "Marcuse observes that the reality principle operates differently in different situations; it does not have the same functions for the aborigine as for the man in modern industrial society."<sup>1058</sup> This is the critical amendment to Freud's failure to account for the socio-historic as well as the biological implications of instinctual sublimation.

The term "performance" is apt in light of Marcuse's critique of technical rationality. As we noted previously, especially in his critique of capitalism's unfortunate influence on higher education, "efficiency" has supplanted "values" and the transmogrified goal of a life well lived is to "perform" exceptionally well as a cog in the machine of industry. The performance principle is the reality of what is considered a life of flourishing within the advanced industrial society; it is what we need to do to our instinctual drives not to allow civilization to endure but, moreover, what we need to do in order to ensure *this* civilization endures, and that requires our performance as part of the machine of industry and our submission to the mandates of technical rationality. Indeed, *just like* technology itself, the performance principle has become "an end in itself ... divorced from rational purpose."<sup>1059</sup> It becomes, as Marks explains, "habitual. It becomes surplus repression, a ritualization of behavior no longer required for safety and

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<sup>1057</sup> Smith, "A Critical Pragmatism: Marcuse, Adorno, and Peirce on the Artificial Stagnation of Individual Development in Advanced Industrial Societies," *Op. Cit.*, 42-43.

<sup>1058</sup> Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 45.

<sup>1059</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

survival.”<sup>1060</sup> The invested interests have no desire to dissolve the holdover needs for repression from a previous epoch when it is they that now control the avenues of tension release as well as benefit from a repressed populace that lack the drive for instinctual release that may bring about a break from the Establishment’s dominion. As Wolff notes:

Some repression serves only to protect the favored position of the rulers, by restraining the subjects from rising up and overthrowing their masters ... at a time when our technology should permit us considerably to relax the bonds of necessary repression, through the shortening and lightening of the workday, through the relaxation of work discipline, and so forth, surplus repression grows greater and greater so that the total burden of repression suffered by modern industrial man is not appreciably lighter than that suffered by his technically less advanced predecessors. The purpose ... of surplus repression is, Marcuse claims, to maintain the ever more manifestly unjustifiable dominance of the ruling sectors of our society.<sup>1061</sup>

As Marcuse said, “under the performance principle, body and mind are made into instruments of alienated labor; they can function as such instruments only if they renounce the freedom of the libidinal subject-object which the human organism primarily is and desires.”<sup>1062</sup>

Further, not only does the domination of authority in advanced society create this surplus repression in the face of diminished scarcity, Marcuse noted, the *types* of pleasure sublimated are, themselves, transmuted to the terms dictated by the power structures; the fundamental theme of “false needs” in *One-Dimensional Man*.

The psychoanalytic interpretation reveals that the reality principle enforces a change not only in the form and timing of pleasure but in its very substance. The adjustment of pleasure to the reality principle implies the subjugation and diversion of the destructive force of instinctual gratification, of its incompatibility with the established societal norms and

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<sup>1060</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1061</sup> Robert Paul Wolff, “Marcuse’s Theory of Toleration,” *Polity* 6, no. 4 (Summer 1974): 469-79, 474.

<sup>1062</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 46.

relations, and, by that token, implies the transubstantiation of pleasure itself.<sup>1063</sup>

Within the industrial society, the reality principle, now transmogrified into the performance principle, alters not only the amount of repression but the avenues of tension release: what we take pleasure *in* is, as we saw throughout *One-Dimensional Man*, conditioned *by* the invested interests to their benefit.

The crucial significance of Marcuse's distinction between basic repression and surplus repression was that it opened up, at the theoretical level at least, a way out of Freud's unhappy equation of civilization with repression. In theory, modern society might be relieved of its repressive character without at the same time falling back into barbarism and chaos.<sup>1064</sup>

Although Marcuse conceded time and again that advanced civilization is still civilization and, as such, a certain basic repression is necessary *now* as it was in the pre-industrial epoch, nevertheless, the surplus repression under the performance principle is engineered by those in power to remain in power to the detriment and limitation of autonomous human expression in an era where scarcity has been significantly diminished.

One major problem in Marcuse's amendment to Freud's fundamental theses seems to emerge: if the end of scarcity is the foundation for surplus repression (if scarcity endured, Marcuse would admit to the necessity of a certain basic form of repression), why is Marcuse so certain that scarcity has, in fact, been diminished to profoundly that the only repression left is surplus? Time and again he notes throughout *One-Dimensional Man* that the Establishment delivers the goods, creating the euphoric indulges that keep a populace complacent, negating the need for repression in an age where civilization is no

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<sup>1063</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>1064</sup> Robinson, *The Freudian Left*, *Op. Cit.*, 203.

longer hanging in the balance of necessary labor to work for food and shelter. The “vital needs,” as he called them, have been fulfilled. Thus, a utopian conclusion should be attainable: “to the degree to which the struggle for existence becomes co-operation for the free development and fulfillment of individual needs, repressive reason gives way to a new rationality of gratification in which reason and happiness converge.”<sup>1065</sup> Happiness is no longer perfunctory or, worse, detrimental to civilization’s continuation. Repressive reason or, as he might otherwise say, “technical rationality,” can now give way to an emancipated realm of pleasure without surplus repression, what he will call an “aesthetic” rationality which we will discuss in the following chapter. Further, without having to pit oneself against the Other, a non-repressive, non-alienated form of solidarity and social individualism of cooperation can replace the heteronymous, pseudo-solidarity of homogeneity. But, as Marks notes, “this alternative is not realized. It is a possibility, not an actuality. In fact, the reverse is the case.”<sup>1066</sup>

It is evident that the overriding theme that unites *Eros and Civilization* with *One-Dimensional Man* is that the creation of false needs and the perpetuation of repression are conducive to the capitalistic goals of those in control of a community of commodity fetishism. As such, it is no surprise that this utopia has not unfolded, despite the foundation for its rise in light of the end of scarcity, as the authority guards against this potential for radical social change through the various means we’ve elucidated at length. As Marcuse said, surplus repression is habituated and thus rarely (if ever) experienced as “surplus,” especially in the absence of the negative thinking that might illuminate it as such. Of course, as we have seen, part of the Establishment’s hold on power is precisely

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<sup>1065</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 205.

<sup>1066</sup> Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 47.

this obfuscation of the “surplus” nature of its repression, as it obfuscates all means of alienation and indoctrination or else run the risk of creating those Peircean individuals of “wider social feeling” that could engage in the negative thinking requisite for radical social change.

However, it is unclear, given this ability to engage in negative thinking and *make* such a realization, precisely how much of the populace of advanced society would be able to authentically make such a claim. Marcuse was quick to illuminate the positive aspects of technological progress, primarily the *ability* of technology to end scarcity and disease. But for what percentage of the populace is this *ability* actually realized? The fact that technology has the *potential*, not in the future but *now*, to reduce scarcity to the point of obscurity, a fundamental concession of Marcuse for his Freudian amendments, is not the same as claiming that potential has been realized for the majority of people. In a nation wherein 35.4% of the wealth in America is in the hands of 1% of the people, and 16% of Americans live below the poverty line, who, exactly, was Marcuse talking about?<sup>1067</sup> Scarcity *can* be diminished into obscurity. Scarcity *has* been diminished into obscurity for some tiny sliver of the American populace. But for the majority of Americans, scarcity is not only alive and well but remains the central factor of the trajectory of their entire lives. “With the globalization of production activities ... we have seen the social distribution of income and wealth become increasingly polarized.”<sup>1068</sup> As Hyman notes:

The distinct modes of scarcity that prevailed at different points in the history of civilization have neither been distributed collectively nor organized to respond to individual needs. The distribution of scarcity has

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<sup>1067</sup> <http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/wealth.html>

<sup>1068</sup> Charles Reitz, *Art, Alienation, and the Humanities: A Critical Engagement with Herbert Marcuse* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 2.

been imposed both on individuals and society, first violently and then more rationally through the manipulation of power. Despite the utility of this form of rationality for the progress of civilization, scarcity remains the rationality of domination.<sup>1069</sup>

This reality does not necessarily undermine Marcuse's position. Repression remains "surplus" repression in America not *because* the citizens experience the end of scarcity but because they don't *need* to experience scarcity at all. Nevertheless they do and toil and labor still dictate the trajectory of their lives as they fight tooth and nail to eke out the fulfillment of even their basic, "vital" needs. This reality would seem, at first, to be antagonistic to the capitalistic goals of the invested interests. True, one efficient way to increase profit margins is to reduce overhead in the form of minimizing pay for laborers but, nevertheless, for businesses to flourish, the working class must be able to afford the goods and luxuries they peddle (false needs), over and above the fulfillment of the vital needs they need to survive. As Marcuse noted in *One-Dimensional Man*, the invested interests must create the desire for the goods that must be profitably sold, not to a tiny elite, but to the majority of people. So, too, must they ensure that the overwhelming majority has the *capability* of affording the goods they are made to desire. The euphoria at the heart of the acquiescence central to Marcuse's thesis in *One-Dimensional Man* is created not because desires go *unfulfilled*. Individuals are given their desires, or in the language of *Eros and Civilization*, the avenues for the release of their instinctual tensions, in order for those desires to be fulfilled *by* the invested interests to their benefit and our alienation and indoctrination. If people can't afford their goods and services, what's the point of instilling those desires in the first place? Moreover, without the ability to fulfill those desires by purchasing those goods and services, there would be no acquiescence,

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<sup>1069</sup> Hyman, "Eros and Freedom: The Critical Psychology of Herbert Marcuse," *Op. Cit.*, 152.

only hostility, and the sort of tension requisite for the radical social change that the one-dimensional society attempts to stave off at all cost. The hostility and the tension experienced precisely *because* an overwhelming number of Americans do *not* experience an end of scarcity *was*, for Marcuse, a fertile ground for the radical social change he seeks. Marcuse was immensely sympathetic to this dilemma and made a close study of the marginalized, the impoverished, the racial, ethnic and gender minorities that do *not* thrive in such a society, that *do* experience scarcity, and that experience the realization that they do not *need* to experience scarcity (and, too, that others not like themselves are freed from it when they are not in a purportedly egalitarian and democratic society), may well be sowing the seeds for the radical change he felt would invariably come about in the long run. In short, there are those individuals of a Peircean “wider sort of social feeling” capable of engaging in Marcusean negative thinking that do *not* experience scarcity, that view repression as surplus repression, that see the performance principle for what it is (indoctrinating, alienating), and rebel against this status quo. But there are other agents at work, as well, for Marcuse, those that experience *enduring* scarcity in a society that could, if it so chose, reduce it to obscurity and see themselves clearly and decidedly as the alienated and impoverished so that the wealthy can remain wealthy, so that those in power may remain in power. The veil of obfuscation perpetuated by the Establishment has less effect on the hyper-marginalized, those who are given desires that *cannot* be satisfied, and Marcuse saw in this tension a site of radical progressive revolt. Indeed, Marcuse began *Counterrevolution and Revolt* with what amounts to a sort of checklist of all of the counterrevolutionary techniques utilized by the authority to stave off radical social change that Peirce enumerated in his critique of the method of authority,



specifically aimed at those who are *not* satisfied by the goods and services offered by the administration: “in the United States, students are still in the forefront of radical protest: the killings at Jackson State and Kent State testify to their historical role. Black militants pay with their lives: Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Fred Hampton, George Jackson.”<sup>1070</sup>

As Marcuse said, “technical progress and the vast output of ‘luxuries’ create and re-create ... the images of a world of ease, enjoyment, fulfillment, and comfort which no longer appears as the exclusive privilege of an elite but rather within the reaches of the masses.”<sup>1071</sup> Certainly Marcuse was right in saying that the Establishment creates the “image” of the attainability of these luxuries for the mass of people, for without the hope and desire to live like “the elite” the impetus to purchase the goods and services offered would be negated; a type of Horatio Alger “rags to riches” bootstrapping mythos. But the reality remains that most *cannot* live up to this image and are subsequently left with unfulfilled desires and goods and services they simply cannot afford. Marcuse referred to these individuals as “small radical minorities.”<sup>1072</sup> In truth, they are anything but, unless we are talking about a type of “political” or “power” minority à la King; in terms of sheer numbers there is nothing “minority” about them, and certainly they are not “small,” but encompass a vast swathe of the population. A site of potential radical social change, “the ghetto population of the United States constitutes such a force.”<sup>1073</sup>

Confined to small areas of living and dying, it can be more easily organized and directed. Moreover, located in the core cities of the country, the ghettos form natural geographical centers from which the struggle can be mounted against targets of vital economic and political importance ...

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<sup>1070</sup> Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *Op. Cit.*, 1.

<sup>1071</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>1072</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>1073</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 57.

their location makes for spreading and “contagious” upheavals. Cruel and indifferent privation is now met with increasing resistance, but its largely unpolitical character facilitates suppression and diversion.<sup>1074</sup>

Not because of negative thinking, nor necessarily even because of ideological concerns, but the pure, brute facticity of unnecessary scarcity (perhaps *surplus* scarcity is an apt term for this phenomenon) and the inability to engage with the mores of commodity fetishism, creates an entire cross-section of the populace primed to engage in the Great Refusal. It’s only *drawback* is precisely its “unpolitical” character, its non-ideological character, granting the tension and irritation requisite for radical social change without a concise structure by which to express that irritation and rise against the forces that ensure the “cruel and indifferent” (and unnecessary) privation they experience.<sup>1075</sup>

The long-range power of the black rebellion is further threatened by the deep division within this class (the rise of a Negro bourgeoisie), and by its marginal (in terms of the capitalist system) social function. The majority of the black population does not occupy a decisive position in the process of production, and the white organizations of labor have not exactly gone out of their way to change this situation. In the cynical terms of the system, a large part of this population is “expendable,” that is to say, it makes no essential contribution to the productivity of the system. Consequently, the powers that be may not hesitate to apply extreme measures of suppression if the movement becomes dangerous. The fact is that, at present in the United States, the black population appears as the “most natural” force of rebellion.<sup>1076</sup>

To these outliers, the counterrevolution of the Establishment manifests its most brutal and violent form. It is not necessarily their ideological differences that separate them from the ideal consumer society but their economic inability to participate in the

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<sup>1074</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1075</sup> “Marcuse did not believe ... that the black ghetto population in the United States had a revolutionary political consciousness ... the black ghetto population ... shares with the students a rejection of the system, but not the consciousness of how and in what direction to change it” (Trudy Steuernagel, “Marcuse, the Women’s Movement, and Women’s Studies,” in *Marcuse: From the New Left to the Next Left*, edited by John Bokina and Timothy J. Lukes [Kansas City: University Press of Kansas, 1994], 92-93).

<sup>1076</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 58.

commodity fetishism that alienates them from the system as a whole. As such, the utilization of the “imago” returns in full force: institutes of higher education instill “liberal” values and must be redesigned to ensure students graduate with degrees that help them become efficient cogs in the machine, capable of affording the goods and services offered by the administration; racial minorities are “lazy” and *choose* not to get the jobs requisite for full participation in commodity capitalism. For those who cannot assimilate, they are labeled as “deviant” or “criminal” by the administration, and violent acts of suppression are ...

primarily directed against powerless but conspicuous minorities who appear as disturbing aliens to the established system, who look different, speak and behave differently, and who are doing things ... which those who accept the social order cannot afford to do. Such targets are black and brown people, hippies, radical intellectuals.<sup>1077</sup>

Along with art (the subject of the next chapter), the “folk tradition” of minorities offered, for Marcuse, the most fertile ground for radical social change:

The latter is largely the language of the oppressed, and as such it has a natural affinity to protest and refusal. In black language, methodically fostered by black people today, it strengthens solidarity, the consciousness of their identity, and of their repressed or distorted cultural tradition. And because of this function, it militates against generalization.<sup>1078</sup>

Inherent in minority culture is the self-awareness of their own oppression, manifesting in a language that is incommensurate with the discourse of the administration, just as the language of Marxism and negative thinking is incommensurate with the goals and ideals of commodity capitalism. In *The Art of Liberation*, Marcuse further emphasized this break from the standard discourse of the Establishment in minority groups:

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<sup>1077</sup> Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *Op. Cit.*, 28.

<sup>1078</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

It is a familiar phenomenon that subcultural groups develop their own language, taking the harmless words of everyday communication out of their context and using them for designating objects or activities tabooed by the Establishment ... but a far more subversive universe of discourse announces itself in the language of black militants. Here is a systematic linguistic rebellion, which smashes the ideological context in which the words are employed and defined, and places them into the opposite context—negation of the established one. Thus, the blacks “take over” some of the most sublime and sublimated concepts of Western civilization, desublimize them, and redefine them.<sup>1079</sup>

Marcuse invoked an interesting reversal of his normal categories of “sublimation” and “desublimation.” From the perspective of positive thinking, the categories and discourse of the Establishment *are* the sublimated for the mass of citizens and thus, from this transcendental norm, the co-opting of the language of the Establishment is, itself, a type of *desublimation*, the redefining of the fundamental terms of the hegemony.

This language manifests in music, as well. Traditionally African-American modes of music, “blues and jazz,” for example, “are not merely new modes of perception reorienting and intensifying the old ones; they rather dissolve the very structure of perception in order to make room” for a *new* sensibility, one that is “not yet ‘given.’”<sup>1080</sup>

*Black music* as the cry and song of the slaves and the ghettos. In this music, the very life and death of black men and women are lived again: the music *is* the body; the aesthetic form is the “gesture” of pain, sorrow, indictment. With the takeover by the whites, a significant change occurs: white “rock” is what its black paradigm is *not*, namely, *performance*. It is as if the crying and shouting, the jumping and playing, now take place in an artificial, organized space.<sup>1081</sup>

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<sup>1079</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 35.

<sup>1080</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>1081</sup> Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *Op. Cit.*, 114-15.

Indeed, even traditionally “black” music has become co-opted in a vibrant display of artificial desublimation by the Establishment, a powerful example of the subtle forms of indoctrination and assimilation utilized by the invested interests.

Consider, for example, Tupac Shakur’s iconic track “Changes,” recorded in 1992. In an intriguing example of sublimation (or, perhaps, counter-desublimation), Tupac utilizes the instrumentation of Bruce Hornsby’s (a white singer-songwriter) 1986 hit song “The Way it is,” and applies it directly to the themes of racial oppression in America:

It’s time for us as a people to start makin’ some changes.  
Let’s change the way we eat, let’s change the way we live  
and let’s change the way we treat each other.  
You see the old way wasn’t working so it’s on us to do  
what we gotta do, to survive.<sup>1082</sup>

It is a song of protest against that which is (either ironic, given the name of the song it’s sampling, or a genius deployment of Marcusean critical theory), a type of negative thinking peaking back behind the veil of obfuscation and alienation. The title itself is a call for progressive social change, change *against* the current milieu (thus, the title of the song is transmuted from “The Way it *is*” to “Changes”) of commodity fetishism and, specifically, it is a song decrying the violence and intolerance aimed at the outliers who do not assimilate into the status quo. Being poor, being black, is enough to consider suicide in the face of a society stacked perpetually *against* success, *against* the ability to even achieve the indoctrinating goals of the Establishment. The pain of hunger, so great that it leads to criminality just to feed oneself, is *not* a sign that scarcity has been eliminated but, rather, the awareness that scarcity *could* be eliminated, if only the color of an individual’s skin were the same color as those who control the flow of capital. The

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<sup>1082</sup> Tupac Shakur, “Changes,” in *Greatest Hits*, Interscope, Amaru, Death Row, and Jive Recording Companies, 1998. While recorded in 1992, when signed to Interscope Records, the song was remixed and released in 1998; later attributions include Deon Evans and Bruce Hornsby as co-authors.

police, enforcing the rules and regulations of the Establishment, are heralded for killing off these minorities: “one less hungry mouth on the welfare.” A culture of violence is championed so that the outliers kill themselves and those like “Huey,” those individuals with wider social feeling that feel it’s time to “fight back,” are gunned down “in the dark.” It is a call to an authentic form of solidarity, to see one another as “brothers” rather than the Sartrean seriality of “distant strangers” aligned at the bus stop. It is a call to change “the way we eat,” “the way we life,” “the way we treat each other” *away* from the Establishment’s mandates and towards an idealized future. And instead of a “war on poverty,” the idealized form of technology’s deployment to end scarcity for Marcuse, the militant efforts of the Establishment seek, instead, to eradicate the radically disenfranchised. The attack is not against poverty and scarcity but against those who *are* poor and those who *are* starving.

Compare this to the average “Top 10” hit of the 21<sup>st</sup> century from some of the most famous black musicians. Bruno Mars, for example, rose to prominence with his mind-numbingly inane jingle “I Want to Be a Billionaire” which is nothing but a wistful daydream listing all of the goods and services he wishes to one day buy and consume. And of course, there are the countless throngs of musicians who *champion* violence not against the Establishment but against one another: a culture of drugs and violence and womanizing precisely that which Tupac warned *against* as an imago of the black as inherently violent and criminal, an image perpetuated by the vested interests to wipe out a minority (by their own hands, to turn them against one another).

Marcuse was also keenly aware of *gender* discrimination and championed movements in women’s liberation as a site of potential radical social change. Feminism,

itself, poses a threat to an “American life” structured by the performance principle in advanced capitalism.<sup>1083</sup> In Steuernagel’s analysis of Marcuse, she brings him into conversation with Susan Faludi and her book *Backlash*. Faludi notes that the Establishment militates against the disenfranchised women in America who have, historically, been kept incapable of integrating into the status quo, by militating against feminism on the two fronts of mass marketing and mass media: “two institutions that have since proved more effective devices for constraining women’s aspirations than coercive laws and punishments.”<sup>1084</sup> As Steuernagel says, “the system uses the tools of mass media and mass marketing to seduce women into believing that feminism is the enemy,” in a key trope of the “imago” that we have discussed previously.<sup>1085</sup> Women, like racial minorities, poor whites and all those who were unable to assimilate into the status quo were those who Marcuse turned to “who were not or should not be satisfied with the existing state of affairs.”<sup>1086</sup> As Steuernagel notes, and as I argued above, beyond the students who have gained the ability to engage in negative thinking on ideological terms and *choose* not to participate in the mores of commodity fetishism, “the second component of the Great Refusal included those whose marginalization by the Establishment prevented their integration,” namely, those who *cannot* participate in the modes of capitalism and thus the indoctrinating mechanisms of desire manipulation for goods and services they cannot afford, greatly nullifying the pacifying effects.<sup>1087</sup> “These

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<sup>1083</sup> Steuernagel, “Marcuse, the Women’s Movement, and Women’s Studies,” *Op. Cit.*, 90.

<sup>1084</sup> Susan Faludi, *Backlash* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991), 48.

<sup>1085</sup> Steuernagel, “Marcuse, the Women’s Movement, and Women’s Studies,” *Op. Cit.*, 90.

<sup>1086</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>1087</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

individuals have revolutionary potential as a result of their race and sex and not as a result of their revolutionary political consciousness.”<sup>1088</sup>

In the case of women, once again, if indoctrination depends upon integration, and if integration depends upon the availability of the goods and services that indoctrinate, to close those avenues of participation minimizes the indoctrinating effects and engenders a consciousness of tension and frustration requisite for radical social change. “Although women are more oppressed by men ... again, as in the case of blacks in the United States, women’s revolutionary potential is linked primarily to their marginalization in the production process and the reduced levels of integration.”<sup>1089</sup> As Marcuse said, “this isolation (separation) from the alienated work world of capitalism enabled the woman to remain less brutalized by the Performance Principle, to remain closer to her sensibility: more human than men.”<sup>1090</sup>

Much has been made of Marcuse’s brief foray into identity politics including critiques of what appears to be an essentializing, on his part, of female “nature” as inherently “non-aggressive” and the degree to which a male-dominated society has determined the self-identification of women in capitalist societies.<sup>1091</sup> To fully address this critique is beyond the scope of this current project but, nevertheless, Marcuse’s fundamental point remains pertinent to our discussion here: precisely *because* a male-dominated society has taken it upon itself to alienate women from the workforce and denied them fair and equal access to capital, their exposure to the indoctrinating tendencies of technical rationality has been diminished compared to their male

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<sup>1088</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1089</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>1090</sup> Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *Op. Cit.*, 77.

<sup>1091</sup> *Ibid.*



counterparts and, as such, are in a better position to desire radical social change. As Hyman notes, “according to Marcuse, progressive alienation itself increases the potential for freedom; the more objectified and therefore distanced necessary labor becomes for the individual, the less it involves him or her in the realm of necessity.”<sup>1092</sup>

In sum, Marcuse’s insights into Freudian psychoanalysis offered a closer look into the indoctrinating tendencies explored later in *One-Dimensional Man*, specifically, the desire modification as it transpires on the most fundamental, instinctual level. His amendments to Freud’s theory, “surplus repression” and “the performance principle,” inject a much needed and clearly absent socio-historical component to Freud’s theory, demonstrating how desire manipulation manifests in, specifically, the advanced industrial society. In exploring Marcuse’s conception of “surplus repression,” modeled after Marx’s notion of “surplus value,” I noted a subtle distinction that must be made, a distinction between a surplus repression forged of the realization that scarcity has ended and the experience of surplus repression forged of the realization that scarcity *could* be ended, and *has been* ended, for *some*, but not all, of the populace. Such a distinction, I maintain, Marcuse was already well aware of, as demonstrated in the aforementioned analysis, though perhaps not drawn forth as explicitly as it could have been. This, what I call “surplus scarcity,” manifests in those individuals who are hyper-marginalized, not the working class which is the focus of most of his work, but the obscenely poor which, I maintain, constitutes a larger swathe of the country that Marcuse admits. Beyond those in abject poverty, the political minorities likewise constitute a cite of hyper-marginalization who experience surplus scarcity as goods and services that they desire, that would otherwise be fulfilled by the Establishment, are denied them for reasons of politics and

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<sup>1092</sup> Hyman, “Eros and Freedom: The Critical Psychology of Herbert Marcuse,” *Op. Cit.*, 146-47.

prejudice. Those who experience surplus scarcity become a site of potential radical social change, not because they engage in negative thinking per se, but because they have been given the desires for goods and services they cannot afford or aren't allowed to have, creating the requisite tension and frustration that grounds the desire for seeking a wholly other way of life. As Marcuse said:

The obvious contradiction between the between the liberating possibilities of the technological transformation of the world, the light and free life on the one hand and the intensification of the struggle for existence on the other, generates among the underlying population that diffused aggressiveness which, unless steered to hate and fight the alleged national enemy, hits upon any suitable target ... this is the aggressiveness of those with the mutilated experience.<sup>1093</sup>

What Peirce called "The Gospel of Greed" creates its own nemesis. Technology *can* eliminate scarcity and poverty for all but, under the sway of capital, it hasn't done so for a great portion of the populace. This experience of surplus scarcity leads creates the potential ground for radical change. The solution would seem to lie in a drastic reevaluation of technology's deployment by those in power: the alleviation of poverty and scarcity even though that might undermine capitalistic growth. Only when emancipated from capital can technology return to its instrumental value and, with it, can the surplus repression experienced in modern society be diminished. As Marks notes:

The central theme in Marcuse's social philosophy ... is that utopian possibilities are inherent in the technical and technological forces of advanced capitalism and advanced socialism. These possibilities consist in the rational use *on a global scale* of the available technology to a single end: to terminate poverty and scarcity.<sup>1094</sup>

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<sup>1093</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 50-51.

<sup>1094</sup> Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 105.

What Marks is referring to here is not the *technical* rationality that Marcuse's critiques, but a rationality liberated from the alienating aspects of technology, hearkening back to Marcuse's discussion of *Bildung* and values, beliefs and desire satisfaction conducive to authentic human flourishing and autonomy. Rationality must be liberated from its technological underpinnings specifically, here, for the potential of scarcity's end to become a reality for *all* people, as Marks says, "*on a global scale*" where technology is returned to its instrumental (rather than indoctrinating) value. For "every type of bureaucracy ... is an exploitive apparatus; and to be dependent on such a system is to prolong servitude."<sup>1095</sup> As Marcuse said, "former luxuries become basic needs"<sup>1096</sup> which may well be true but, I would add, those former-luxuries-now-basic-needs are soon complemented by *new* luxuries *beyond* the old ones, and the former luxuries, now basic needs, are still not necessarily affordable for the majority of the populace, "basic needs" as they may have become. Indeed, this adds another level to the tension by the radically disenfranchised: they are increasingly alienated from an increasing standard of living and more and more do the goods and services they made to desire slip out of their reach.

It is not enough for technology to arrive at the point of being *able* to eliminate scarcity, as Marcuse suggested it more or less already has, but that the *values* of the human beings in control of that technology's deployment must be radically altered. "What is required at this stage of social history is a qualitative change in the 'nature' of man," a change that can only come about "through the progressive development of an attitude of refusal—the 'great refusal,' the rejection of domination by the

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<sup>1095</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>1096</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 50.

Establishment—any Establishment, even one nominally dedicated to social welfare.”<sup>1097</sup>

As Marcuse said in *An Essay on Liberation*:

For the world of human freedom cannot be built by the established societies, no matter how much they may streamline and rationalize their dominion. Their class structure, and the perfected controls required to sustain it, generate needs, satisfactions, and values which reproduce the servitude of the human existence. This “voluntary” servitude ... which justifies the benevolent masters, can be broken only through a political practice which reaches the roots of the containment and contentment in the infrastructure of man, a political practice of methodical disengagement from an refusal of the Establishment, aiming at a radical transvaluation of values. Such a practice involves a break with the familiar, the routine ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, understanding things so that the organism may become receptive to the potential forms of a nonaggressive, nonexploitative world.<sup>1098</sup>

Until negative thinking is pervasive enough to lead to a Great Refusal on the scale and scope of radical social change through the radical revaluation of values, the deployment of technology to the end of eliminating scarcity and poverty (its ideal form of use, for Marcuse) will remain *potential* rather than *actual* in a system dominating by capital. Until such an emancipated form of rationality and technology comes about, “surplus” repression must be seen *not* as the “end of scarcity” per se but, rather, as the unfulfilled potential of the end of scarcity for the great majority of those living within advanced technological capitalistic societies.

Ultimately, as Farr affirms, “Freud’s theory of the instincts provides Marcuse with a new anthropological foundation for Revolution.”<sup>1099</sup> Kellner explains Marcuse’s drive to incorporate Freudian theory into his Marxism and the ultimate, utopian possibilities inherent in such a project:

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<sup>1097</sup> Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 106.

<sup>1098</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 6.

<sup>1099</sup> Arnold Farr, *Critical Theory and Democratic Vision: Herbert Marcuse and Recent Liberation Philosophies* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 56.

Since history had not provided a guarantee of revolution, Marcuse turned to nature to provide a foundation for revolutionary possibility. In his reading of Freud, human nature contained rebellious and creative energies which will not tolerate excessive oppression and, if liberated, could generate revolutionary struggle. In a sense, Marcuse is returning to the revolutionary perspectives of his first period, where a contradiction between human nature and capitalist society elicited “radical action.”<sup>1100</sup>

From Freud, Marcuse saw a fundamental foundation for radical social change in the very nature of humanity itself. As Wolff notes:

The repressed content of the unconscious in all of us exists as a permanent psychic pool or source of opposition to the established order of society. We all construct powerful defenses against this repressed content within ourselves, using such familiar mechanisms as denial, projection, and transference. When a rebellious member of society violates some taboo ... he provokes a response that is exaggerated all out of proportion.<sup>1101</sup>

Intriguingly, Marcuse provided another alternative to Peirce’s potential dissolution of the method of authority. Though Peirce admitted a certain biological necessity of inquiry forged of a preternatural repulsion towards doubt, this sensation of doubt can be staved off nearly perpetually by the invested interest unless an individual with wider social feeling can discover a productive comparison to the current milieu by looking abroad to other systems or past manifestations of his or her own. Marcuse added a third dimension for the possibility of radical social change: within each individual citizen, tension *already* exists and is perpetually struggling for release against the mores of a repressive society.

The instinctual drives, as Marcuse noted, are never dissolved by the Reality Principle but exist in a suppressed, sublimated form that threaten to emerge if emancipated from the surplus repression of the Performance Principle in advanced

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<sup>1100</sup> Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 162.

<sup>1101</sup> Wolff, “Marcuse’s Theory of Toleration,” *Op. Cit.*, 475.

societies; it is an inherent drive for something other than the confining parameters of the modern age. *Eros* is, itself, the potential for imaginative negative thinking precisely because it is confounded (experiences the requisite Peircean tension for inquiry and change) by the Performance Principle. As Farr notes:

In what way is eros a form of prophetic imagination? As we have seen, the function of the imagination is to present the individual with an image of a possibly new and qualitatively different, a liberated, reality principle. The prophetic is a call for transformation, an overturning of the present order, a rupture in the continuum of domination. In Marcuse's critical theory eros functions as the prophetic call for liberation.<sup>1102</sup>

The presence of *Eros* creates "a constant dialectical tension between one's internal biological system and external cultural conditions."<sup>1103</sup> The repressed instincts, never dissolved entirely, continue to "manifest themselves as fantasy. Fantasy or the imagination functions as the principle of negation whereby the present, repressive reality principle is constantly challenged by the possibility of a better, liberated experience."<sup>1104</sup>

As Habermas confirms, for Marcuse:

As soon as the progress of civilization, which is based on the repressive modification of the instincts, increases, the existence of a surplus product not leading to individual gratification provokes a reaction from both Eros and Thanatos. Once instinctual repression loses its function for necessary self-preservation, the two conservative powers behind the scenes of civilization form a coalition and demand the recalling of energies from alienated labor.<sup>1105</sup>

As such, we may move to the final chapter in our analysis of Marcuse. The different strains of his thought complement one another and move us towards a Utopian

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<sup>1102</sup> Farr, *Critical Theory and Democratic Vision*, Op. Cit., 56.

<sup>1103</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>1104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1105</sup> Jürgen Habermas, "Psychic Thermidor and the Rebirth of Rebellious Subjectivity," in *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*, ed. Robert Pippin, Andrew Feenberg and Charles Webel (Boston: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1988), 10.

alternative: Marcuse's adaptation of Weber's technical rationality forms the foundation of indoctrination in industrial societies which create surplus repression to perpetuate their own agendas through processes of indoctrination and the dissolution of the requisite negative thinking. In order to move *away* from the stultifying milieu of the present, the conditions for such emancipation have already been laid subtly throughout our investigation: rationality must be emancipated from technology's hold and technology must be returned to its instrumental function as that which has as its sole aim the elevation of scarcity and poverty. Freed from these repressive confines, fantasy, imagination and *Eros* dictate a *new* sensibility, as he calls it, not one of technical rationality but a distinct "aesthetic" dimension antithetical to the mandates of technocracy, commodity fetishism, and advanced capitalist culture. This "new direction of progress would depend completely on the opportunity to activate repressed or arrested *organic*, biological needs: to make the human body an instrument of pleasure rather than labor ... the emergence of new, qualitatively different needs and faculties seemed to be the perquisite, the content of liberation."<sup>1106</sup>

This "new sensibility" is not the dissolution of reason in favor of a release of unrestrained *Eros*. Rather, Marcuse was championing a *fusion* of reason and pleasure rather than the strict dualism that repression appears to demand for civilization's flourishing, an erotic or aesthetic rationality in sharp contrast to the prevailing technical rationality of the modern age. "It is in and through the joining of instinct and reason that we can fashion a new rationality which shatters the constricting dualisms, the domination of the present. Our biological bases are the vehicles of liberation; they open from the

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<sup>1106</sup> Ross Fitzgerald, "Human Needs and Politics: The Ideas of Christian Bay and Herbert Marcuse," *Political Psychology* 6, no. 1 (March 1985): 87 – 108, 91.

realm of necessity (instinct) onto the plateau of freedom (reason).”<sup>1107</sup> The instincts, sublimated and repressed in the current milieu, must be emancipated not in *conflict* with reason, but utilized by it, fused with it, to construct a new rationality, forged of new values, all of which in direct conflict with the *technical rationality* of the modern age, not a conflict with reason, itself. The instincts “must be channeled *by* a rationality that partakes both of the realms of necessity and freedom,” effectively recreating “labour as gratifying as well as socially useful activity,” not gratification at the expense of social utility.<sup>1108</sup> As we recall, for Marcuse, basic repression remained a necessity for civilization in any form and, as such, he is not advocating a kind of hedonism that would cripple civilization. It is not a world *without* toil, but a world where toil is *infused* with pleasure. As we saw, Marcuse linked this new sensibility with the imagination and it plays a central part in his utopian vision which will be the subject of our next chapter:

Imagination envisions the reconciliation ... of happiness with reason. While this harmony has been removed into utopia by the established reality principle, phantasy insists that it must and can become real, that behind the illusion lies *knowledge*. The truths of imagination are first realized when phantasy itself takes form, when it creates a universe of perception and comprehension—a subjective and at the same time objective universe. This occurs in *art*. The analysis of the cognitive function of phantasy is thus led to aesthetics as the “science of beauty”: behind the aesthetic form lies the repressed harmony of sensuousness and reason—the eternal protest against the organization of life by the logic of domination, the critique of the performance principle.<sup>1109</sup>

Thus, all of the themes we have so far engaged become clearly interwoven into a decisive systematic critique of one-dimensional society. The “logic of domination,” tied inextricably with “technical rationality,” militates against the emancipation of instincts,

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<sup>1107</sup> Agger, “Marcuse’s Freudian Marxism,” *Op. Cit.*, 320.

<sup>1108</sup> *Ibid.*, my emphasis.

<sup>1109</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 33.



relegating a non-repressive civilization to the realm of phantasy. But phantasy, as Marcuse noted in Freud, is never wholly obliterated by the reality principle but persists *despite* its indoctrinating manifestation in the performance principle. It is a vehicle not for a return to a chimerical “golden age” but a tool to envision wholly alternative modes of existence to the current milieu, a type of “negative” thinking requisite for radical social change. And despite the authority’s ability to infiltrate into every aspect of waking life, creating as it does false needs and a false consciousness resulting in a type of “euphoria in unhappiness,” this instinctual realm, encrusted with indoctrination as it has become, remains a cite of potential emancipation through phantasy and, as we’ll see in our next chapter and as Marcuse foreshadows here, through art: *Eros* and phantasy do not *supplant* rationality, but are synthesized *with* it, offering a “new sensibility,” a new “aesthetic rationality,” that merges toil with pleasure in a civilization freed from surplus repression. This is a utopia that *can* exist, for Marcuse, and it is to this potential utopian vision that we now turn.

## Chapter 10

### Utopia and the Aesthetic Dimension

Governed by his first rule of reason, Peirce sought to illuminate and dissolve the blockades to inquiry. Similarly, Marcuse, via his deployment of negative thinking, sought to illuminate and dissolve the indoctrinating mores and values of the one-dimensional society. Both confronted a profound instrumentalism of human cognitive capacities and the types of blockades of inquiry Peirce articulated likewise existed as the alienating and indoctrinating mores of one-dimensional society for Marcuse. Indeed, I maintain that a Marcusean critical theory of the advanced industrial society confronts the blockades of inquiry established by a Peircean authority. Both philosophers desired a radical form of autonomy. Though Peirce never articulated a utopian vision, nascent in his method of inquiry was a socio-political coordination comprised of an ideal, *unlimited* community of inquirers operating in a milieu wherein inquiry could flourish as wide and varied as the human imagination itself. Marcuse, however, explicitly laid bare the general framework of a post-one-dimensional society, a utopia, in a word, freed from the alienation and indoctrination of the advanced technocracy.

As we noted, for Marcuse, technology had long since lost its instrumental value as a neutral entity at the command of the individuals that employ it. It had taken up a “productivity” and momentum all its own, commanding the individuals to align with its

mandates in a phenomenon beyond the direct, immediate control of any individual *praxes* that contribute to it. As such, in Marcuse's utopian vision, it would follow that the instrumental deployment of technology must be liberated from its productive role in domination. It was not a return to some pre-industrial age that Marcuse sought, as we've said, one riddled with the superstitions and mystification of a Puritanical age with its own oppressive forms of domination and social control. Technology must *remain* in a future utopian society as it is the primary means of limiting scarcity and poverty provided it is instrumentally utilized to those ends and *only* those ends, emancipated from its indoctrinating tendencies under capitalism.

The socio-historic evolution of technology from its instrumental nature to one of indoctrinating productivity coincides with the rise of modern capitalism and commodity fetishism, deployed to create and satisfy the "false needs" conducive to the perpetuation of corporate powers. Via negative thinking, it would follow that, in order to emancipate technology from its productive moorings, a radical revaluation of human needs would have to occur: a movement from the desire for these surplus goods and services towards the fulfillment of the "vital" needs of nourishment, clothing, shelter, at a reasonable level of sustenance and comfort. Further, the indoctrinating nature of technology is intimately bound up with the immediate association of "technology" and "rationality," as Weber called it, "technical rationality," wherein the progressive and efficient come to be seen as the rational and pitted against the irrationality of the previous, pre-industrial age. As such, technology must be divorced entirely from rationality, employed *by* rationality, and a new "sensibility," a new form of rationality, must emerge in its stead. In short, technology

would return to its instrumental form just as human rationality would rise past *its* instrumentalism to take part in autonomous value creation and assessment once more.

Since Marcuse's critique of technology formed the bedrock of his critique of one-dimensional society, like a domino effect, the reformulation of society as depicted in *One-Dimensional Man* unfolds from this proceeding critique. With the dissolution of commodity fetishism and the deployment of technology to produce these superfluous goods and services, the "false needs" so central to the Establishment's domination of individuality are dissolved and, with them, the need for surplus toil and labor requisite for the accumulation of capital necessary for the procurement of these goods and services that are no longer desired. Since the *creation* of, and subsequent *delivery* of, the false needs create the euphoric unhappiness in society, individuals are once again freed from both surplus labor time and desire for these goods, dissolving the false consciousness and heteronomy of mass mentality. Authenticity reemerges as individuals are freed to self-narrate, self-legislate, in a universe of discourse and pursuits that are once again of their *own* making.

The very term "one-dimensional" referred to an "increasingly homogenous society and culture that suppressed higher dimensions of critique and alternatives" and, as such, a *new* dimension must transcend the uni-dimensionality of the established universe of discourse, needs, and rationality.<sup>1110</sup> Thus "*another dimension* of reality" must be added, an "aesthetic dimension" which will undermine the vicissitudes of indoctrination in the advanced industrial society, one which has featured to varying degrees throughout

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<sup>1110</sup> Douglas Kellner, "Marcuse, Art, and Liberation," in *The Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, vol. 4, *Art and Liberation*, ed. Douglas Kellner (Routledge: New York, 2007), 37.

all of Marcuse's work but takes on new significance and connotation in light of his work in the 50's and 60's until his final publication, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, in 1977.<sup>1111</sup>

In *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse's primary amendments to Freudian psychology, namely "surplus repression" and "the performance principle," must, too, be addressed. The manifestation of the reality principle in the modern milieu, what Marcuse called "the performance principle," was, effectively, synonymous with one-dimensional society as he would later articulate it in *One-Dimensional Man*. Forged of the commodity fetishism of advanced capitalism, the "surplus" repression would be reduced, once more, to "basic" repression requisite for the perpetuation of civilization in its least repressive form. *Eros* would be freed towards greater heights of self-expression as the reasons for surplus repression (the creation and desire for superfluous goods and services, unnecessary amounts of scarcity, and a power structure bent on the perpetuation of earlier, and now obsolete, requirements of repression in light of this scarcity) would be dissolved. Here, too, we see the ingression of an aesthetic dimension that transcends the performance principle through the imagination's deployment of fantasy, in coordination with memory and art, to not only de-obfuscate the indoctrinating structures of repression and alienation but, too, conjure entirely new realities in sharp contrast to those maintained in the modern milieu.

Thus, Marcuse's utopia would seem to suggest the following, based on the negation of the current milieu alone: technology would be restored to its instrumental value and deployed exclusively for the reduction of scarcity and poverty;<sup>1112</sup> the false

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<sup>1111</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 57.

<sup>1112</sup> It might be argued that technology, though it would need to be employed *instrumentally* to the negation of scarcity and poverty, would also be utilized in its *productive* capacities with the added caveat that, no

needs of commodity fetishism would be dissolved in favor of the “vital” needs only; and libidinal instincts would be freed from surplus repression. The result would, consequently, seem to entail the following: the dissolution of heteronomy and restoration of autonomy; the fusion of labor and pleasure in a less repressive society; and the reemergence of authentic individuality with the dissolution of mass mentality.

*How* this utopia emerges can likewise be ascertained, at least in part, by relying solely on negative thinking in the manner we have just engaged. At base, the most fundamental changes requisite for a utopian society are three-fold: first, a radical revaluation of needs *away* from the goods and services of commodity fetishism thereby restoring technology to its instrumental value while freeing it towards a new *productive* capacity generative of beauty, art, and pleasure. Second, it would entail the emancipation of instincts from out of the dominion of repression through fantasy and art. Third, it would require the championing of negative thinking through education, requisite for a Great Refusal and the radical social change necessary to bring about a better world.

As we turn to Marcuse’s explicit utopian vision, we will see the inexorable manifestation of these alternatives to the current milieu stemming from imagination’s role (“fantasy”) manifest in art, emancipating the instincts and aiding negative thinking to conjure a societal structure unburdened by technical rationality. The free-play of imagination, as I demonstrated, was likewise central to Peirce’s own endeavors in the mode of abductive inquiry.

As we’ve explored, Weber’s conception of “technical rationality” is so ubiquitous in the industrial society as to not only infiltrate every aspect of life, from the direction of

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longer mobilizing rationality towards efficiency and productivity, fused with a new, aesthetic rationality, would generate new forms of pleasure and beauty in this utopian society.

higher education to the ways in which we take our leisure, but does so relatively unnoticed, receding into the background *gestalt* of lived experience as rationality *becomes* technology and that identification is no longer questioned. Of course, it is conducive to the perpetuation of the Establishment to *not* draw attention to the contingency of that relationship as technical rationality is beneficial to commodity fetishism and the basic mores of capital. As Ingram notes, “the Frankfurt School’s reliance on Weber’s theory of rationalization led them to embrace a starkly pessimistic vision of modern society.”<sup>1113</sup> Weber’s technical rationality bears upon Marcuse’s Freudian analysis as well, framed naturalistically as an organism’s need to adapt and survive in its environment.

In the absence of absolute values, the only end worth pursuing is self-preservation. Adaptability, or technological domination for the sake of domination, becomes synonymous with reason. In the final analysis, technological rationality not only conceives reality as a unified, mathematical system. It actively constitutes it as such.<sup>1114</sup>

Adaptability becomes equated with what *is* rational. Throughout Peirce, as we recall, adaptability was central to his theory of belief formation. Inquiry, itself, was the mode of adaptation, the impetus to move from a state of disequilibrium (doubt) to a state of equilibrium (belief) once more. But within the method of authority, the surest way to adapt, to survive, is to acquiesce to the proliferated beliefs of the hegemony. Read as such, this complicates the nature of the individuals with wider social feeling that challenge the authority and the accepted norms of the indoctrinating society. On the one hand, these individuals are *irrational* precisely because they threaten their own existence, their own “self-preservation,” by challenging the fundamental tenets of the authority.

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<sup>1113</sup> David Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: Paragon House, 1990), 72.

<sup>1114</sup> *Ibid.*

They are *made* to be viewed by their fellows as irrational by the authority, one more mechanism of social control, being labeled as deviant, defiant, criminal. On the other hand, these individuals strive for a *higher* form of adaptability, using the method of inquiry to acquire more stable beliefs than those that the authority permit, beliefs that better lead to Truth and Reality, not as the authority would dictate them, but as they really *are*, for Peirce. But this higher form of adaptability can only be viewed properly from the perspective of the long run. In the long run, the authority itself *is* the problem that must be overcome in order to achieve an ever-greater state of belief. In the short run, however, it may be viewed as irrationality, as madness; to challenge a system in such a way that one's own self-preservation is on the line.

A similar issue is at stake here. If technology is the means of assimilation, then the individual within such a milieu, operating within the performance principle, adapts by aligning him or herself with the mores of capital and commodity fetishism. One of the most fundamental principles in Freud's theory is the (apparently) necessary correlation between instinctual repression and civilization. *If* individuals are to preserve themselves they must *adapt* to the mandates of civilization, thereby necessitating the sublimation of their drives and repression of their instincts. The well-adapted individual becomes the efficient worker and consumer in a technocratic society. "The *standardization* of production, dictated by technically efficient methods of mass production, requires a mass market composed of persons possessing uniform (standard) needs."<sup>1115</sup> If you swap "needs" with "beliefs" you have the very essence of Peirce's method of authority. Advertising and mass marketing instill the needs for the commodities that must be

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<sup>1115</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.



profitably sold in a universe of goods and services that one-dimensionalize, standardize the needs of all, a “homogeneous identity of mass consumers.”<sup>1116</sup>

If rationality *is* technical rationality, if adaptation and self-preservation *is* repression and sublimation to this new performance principle, then what one *ought* to do is confirmed as rational by the invested interests in the advanced industrial society: a totalizing, self-perpetuating system of control and indoctrination. Marcuse never fully succumbed to this intense degree of pessimism, however, based in no small part on his insistence on dialectical thinking and his emancipatory reading of Freud. To the former, Marcuse witnessed the endurance of negative or dialectical thinking in pockets of society within the advanced industrial society; in students and in the wildly disenfranchised minorities who do not enjoy the euphoric pleasures of commodity capitalism enough to succumb to total acquiescence. To the latter, the pleasure principle is never wholly negated by the performance principle, but endures as sublimated with the potential for eventual emancipation from surplus repression, manifest through fantasy, memory, and art. For Marcuse, although reason has become aligned with technology and adaptation to the mores of the performance principle, this is a contingent, and not necessary, fact of the present reality and, as such, he held out hope for an emancipated form of rationality divorced from the technical aspects of commodity capitalism. He never wholly abandoned his “commitment to emancipatory reason entirely” for “critical, dialectical reason—that technological society suppresses—continues to live on ... in the aesthetic unconscious (imagination).”<sup>1117</sup>

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<sup>1116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1117</sup> *Ibid.* Marcuse adapted a Freudian conception of the unconscious in *Eros and Civilization*: “the unconscious, the deepest and oldest layer of the mental personality, is the drive for integral gratification, which is absence of want and repression. As such it is the immediate identity of necessity and

It would follow, then, that emancipation from the indoctrinating form of technical rationality *is* possible through, specifically, the cultivation of imagination as it manifests in art and all forms of negative thinking. This may be engaged throughout forms of higher education,<sup>1118</sup> as we saw in our analysis of Marcuse's radical pedagogy, at least where efficiency and technical rationality haven't completely subverted institutions of higher learning from their ideal ends. Perhaps more useful still, as Peirce noted as well, is the cultivation of such talents at a far earlier stage in human development. As I discussed, "fantasy" or "imagination," an aspect of negative thinking, is manifest in children whose instinctual suppression has not yet been fully indoctrinated and sublimated into the present performance principle. Marcuse's Freudian analysis of this phenomenon parallels the results of the Frankfurt School's 1950 study, *The Authoritarian Personality* that we discussed briefly. The results of this study, spearheaded by Horkheimer, concluded that:

The roots of authoritarianism lie in early childhood development. Children raised by parents who enforce rigid discipline and submission to authority are likely to feel helpless and inferior, while projecting their repressed hostility onto out-groups ... the solution to the problem lies in reeducation.<sup>1119</sup>

As Peirce noted, a key aspect to indoctrination within the method of authority is instilling the beliefs conducive to the authority's hold on power to the young and those properly assimilated will turn their repressed hostility not on the indoctrinating hegemony but on

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freedom...the equation of freedom and happiness tabooed by the conscious is upheld by the unconscious" (Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 18). The relationship between phantasy (imagination) and the unconscious he framed in this way: "Phantasy plays a most decisive function in the total mental structure: it links the deepest layers of the unconscious with the highest products of consciousness (art); the dream with the reality; it preserves the archetypes of the genus, the perpetual but repressed ideas of the collective and individual memory, the tabooed images of freedom" (*Ibid.*, 140-41).

<sup>1118</sup> "The essential connection of education to the resolution of these tensions and the attainment of the social potential of the human race is an integral part of [Marcuse's] general theoretical discourse," Charles Reitz, *Art, Liberation, and the Humanities: A Critical Engagement with Herbert Marcuse* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 5.

<sup>1119</sup> Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 76.

any and all who deviate from the norms and mores of that establishment, effectively self-regulating the perpetuation of the system of control. The same is seen here. The child's mind is not emancipated *from* indoctrination, it is prior *to* indoctrination, and as Marcuse noted in Freud, such unrepressed instincts are sublimated but never totally dissolved as individuals are brought up into the mandates of the performance principle.

This would seem to run contrary to the notion that rationality *is* adaptability. Effectively, the recommendation would be to raise children who do *not* conform to the established system of indoctrination and thus raise serious challenges to their self-preservation under the mandates of the performance principle. As such, this form of education would seem inherently *irrational*. This raises a primary concern throughout Marcuse's vast corpus, namely, the dialectical relationship between the individual and the social: society's mandates must change in order for this form of education to be rational and conducive to self-preservation and for the human organism to adapt to an environment that is not hostile to critical thinking, imagination, and unrepressed desires. What we call "rational" (technical rationality) must, itself, be transformed into a *new* rationality, a *new* sensibility. But if this form of education takes place only on the level of childhood development, and not systemically throughout *all* echelons of advanced industrial society, every child conditioned *against* indoctrination will be acculturated *into* that system of control and either acquiesce *to* it or else be ostracized *from* it. Although this form of early, radical pedagogy may be part of the solution, ultimately, the solution must be broader and more fundamental: a radical transformation of rationality itself. As Marcuse said, "reason presupposes freedom, the power to act in accordance with

knowledge of the truth, the power to shape reality in line with its potentialities.”<sup>1120</sup> It is here, Bronner notes, “that the basis for Marcuse’s utopian conception emerges.”<sup>1121</sup> If rationality presupposes freedom, but technical rationality in the performance principle is a site of indoctrination and profound *unfreedom*, “technical rationality” is *not* “rationality” as Marcuse defines it but is, itself, inherently *irrational* precisely because it negates the freedom requisite for rationality in the first place. Only the most profound and radical type of negative thinking can unweave this unfortunate association of technology and rationality, a dialectical thinking that must “risk defining freedom in such a way that people become conscious of and recognize it as something that is nowhere already in existence.”<sup>1122</sup> As Bronner notes, “once freedom is defined in this way, even if it remains subjectively unrecognized, the potential for utopia will objectively be maintained,”<sup>1123</sup> at least, as Marcuse says, as the “determinate socio-historical negation of what exists.”<sup>1124</sup>

This highlights the interrelation between “freedom” and “negative thinking,” specifically, the latter’s ability to bring about the former. Negative thinking operates in the realm of potentiality, for Marcuse, that which is *not* as opposed to that which *is* (the stultifying milieu of one-dimensional society, the performance principle, and everything Marcuse critiqued throughout his work).<sup>1125</sup> Negative thinking also conjures a subtle comparison to Peirce’s conception of “the long run,” his fallibilism, his method of inquiry, and his first rule of reason. Precisely because inquiry is open-ended and the

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<sup>1120</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 9.

<sup>1121</sup> Stephen Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 112.

<sup>1122</sup> Herbert Marcuse, “The End of Utopia,” in *Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics and Utopia* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 68 – 69.

<sup>1123</sup> Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, *Op. Cit.*, 112.

<sup>1124</sup> Marcuse, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, *Op. Cit.*, 230.

<sup>1125</sup> Further, this emphasizes Marcuse’s opposition to positivism, once more, the “philosophical” analysis of exclusively that which *is* and that relegates potentiality, what is *not*, to the realm of metaphysical speculation that ought to be dissolved, according to positivists.

conclusions ever-revisable, there is an omnipresent sense of potentiality throughout Peirce's methodology, an insistence that to submit to chimerical claims of apodicticity, blockading further inquiry, admits that conclusions about Truth or Reality are, at last, fully actualized. There is no such totalizing actualization in Peirce for all of the reasons we have enumerated previously. "Freedom" here, like Peirce's "Truth," is that which negative thinking keeps alive as a potentiality-yet-to-be-actualized, thereby staving off complete submission to the chimerical claims of apodicticity and necessity perpetuated by, and conducive to, the Establishment's systemic control.

Further, from the basic associations above, it is plain that technology has long since been divorced from its instrumental value as the means of diminishing scarcity and poverty. Had it been deployed to those ends and *only* those ends, that is, not succumbing to the productivity and indoctrinating uses in modern capital, the scarcity necessitating surplus repression would be dissolved and, with it, the entire structure of the performance principle, emancipating the underlying pleasure principle as far as the basic repression for civilization allows. Precisely because technology perpetuates scarcity and profits from it, it is clear that "technology" is no longer "technics" in its previous, pre-industrialized form. It is not being used for what Marcuse believed it ought to be used for, its ideal and most fundamental deployment, having been co-opted by commodity fetishism and modern capitalism. Thus, technology must be restored to its instrumental value as a *means* to end scarcity and thereby dissolve the performance principle and all of the false needs, false consciousness, indoctrination and heteronomy that stems from it. We need a new rationality, in short, and return technology to its proper form, as something under the control of humanity rather than its master.

The “pacification of existence” is the liberation of “nature from its own violence and cruelty.”<sup>1126</sup> This was the heart of Marcuse’s critique of technology’s productive deployment in the one-dimensional society to the indoctrinating ends of consumer culture, destroying nature rather than finding a way to live in accord with it.<sup>1127</sup> It is the difference between the “cultivation of the soil” and the “destruction of the soil,” “extraction of natural resources” and “wasteful exploitation.”<sup>1128</sup> As Habermas notes in his study of this emancipatory aspect of technology in Marcuse:

Instead of treating nature as the object of possible control, we can encounter her as an opposing partner in a possible interaction. We can seek out a fraternal rather than an exploited nature. At the level of an as

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<sup>1126</sup> Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 87.

<sup>1127</sup> Marcuse made a careful study of “Nature” in relation to “technology” in *One-Dimensional Man*. He said, for example, that the “primary object” of technology is “Nature.” Further: “pacification presupposes mastery of Nature, which is and remains the object of opposed to the developing subject. But there are two kinds of mastery: a repressive and a liberating one. The latter involves the reduction of misery, violence, and cruelty. In Nature as well as in History, the struggle for existence is the token of scarcity, suffering, and want...this realm is gradually mediated in the course of the historical transformation of Nature; it becomes part of the human world, and to this extend, the qualities of Nature are historical qualities. In the process of civilization, Nature ceases to be mere Nature to the degree to which the struggle of blind forces is comprehended and mastered in the light of freedom. History is the negation of Nature. What is only natural is overcome and recreated by the power of Reason...if Nature is in itself a rational, legitimate object of science, then it is the legitimate object not only of Reason as power but also of Reason as freedom; not only of domination but also of liberation. With the emergence of man as the *animal rationale* – capable of transforming Nature in accordance with the faculties of the mind and the capacities of matter – the merely natural, as the subrational, assumes negative status. It becomes a realm to be comprehended and organized by Reason. And to the degree to which Reason succeeds in subjecting matter to rational standards and aims, all sub-rational existence appears to be want and privation, and their reduction becomes the historical task. Suffering, violence, and destruction are categories of the natural as well as human reality, of a helpless and heartless universe,” Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 236–237. Thus, for Marcuse, there is a sense here of a Nature existing in-itself, prior to humanity’s engagement with it, though the focus here is certainly on *human* history, that is, when Nature ceased to be “mere Nature.” The rationalizing of Nature carries with it the initial neutrality (and opposing potentialities) of his earlier position on technology in the sense that humanity’s engagement with Nature as *either* through domination *or* liberation (and Marcuse champions the latter). Indeed, Marcuse cites Bertrand Russell’s analysis of the Vatican’s reaction to P.E.T.A. as an example of how, even *if* Nature is becoming rationalized into a human milieu, we must resist the temptation to claim that it is subservient to human needs *unequivocally*: “When the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals asked the Pope for his support, he refused it, on the ground that human beings owe no duty to lower animals, and that ill-treating animals is not sinful. This is because animals have no souls,” *Ibid.*, 237 (citing Russell’s *Unpopular Essays* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1950], 76). Marcuse seemed to echo Peirce’s conception of Nature as rational and a rational object of inquiry, that is, a knowable object of inquiry, where human Reason can penetrate and be penetrated *by* it. This can be done in one of two ways, for Marcuse, a “mastery” of domination (which he rejected) or a “mastery” of liberation (which he embraced as the “pacification” of existence).

<sup>1128</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

yet incomplete intersubjectivity we can impute subjectivity to animals and plants, even to minerals, and try to communicate with nature instead of merely possessing her under conditions of severed communication.<sup>1129</sup>

Technology returned to its ideal form would entail a complete transmutation of humanity's interaction with nature and this transfiguration of the basic uses of technology was central to Marcuse's Utopian vision. However, in order to move technology's deployment in this direction, we must first address the "false needs" and desires we have for the productivity of technology in modern capitalism, specifically, the phenomenon of commodity fetishism. For as long as we desire these surplus goods, so far above and beyond our "vital needs," technology will continue to operate as it does within the performance principle and the invested interests will continue to profit while the trajectory of civilization remains fundamentally riddled with surplus repression. This, in turn, entails a radical transformation of humanity's fundamental values away from the desires instilled in us by the vested interests and how those desires are fulfilled, how those tensions are released, in ways diametrically opposed to the ways in which technology is currently deployed to meet these needs.

The fusion of art and technology was perhaps expressed best in *One-Dimensional Man* wherein Marcuse discussed what he called an "aesthetic reduction."<sup>1130</sup> There, Marcuse explicitly called for a "radical reconstruction of technology and the environment," a "merger of art and technology" wherein "reason would converge with art, recapturing the affinity between art and technique stressed by the Greeks. A new

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<sup>1129</sup> Jürgen Habermas, "Technology and Science as Ideology," in *Toward a Rational Society*, trans. J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 88.

<sup>1130</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 238.

technology would help a more aestheticized reality and could be part of an art of life.”<sup>1131</sup>

In complementary fashion, technical rationality would be split by the aesthetic dimension: technology would no longer be associated with rationality and a *new* rationality, one more aligned with aesthetics, would replace it and would utilize technology to create a more aesthetic world devoid of environmental devastation and individual alienation. As Marcuse said:

The rationality of art, its ability to ‘project’ existence, to define yet unrealized possibilities could then be envisaged as *validated by and functioning in the scientific-technological transformation of the world*. Rather than being the handmaiden of the established apparatus, beautifying its business and its misery, art would become a technology for destroying this business and this misery.<sup>1132</sup>

As such, as Kellner notes, “aesthetic values would be merged with practice in the transforming activity of rebuilding the environment, houses, and cities,”<sup>1133</sup> producing, in Marcuse’s words, “society as a work of art.”<sup>1134</sup>

Marcuse’s amendments of Freudian psychoanalysis, as we’ve seen, suggest the direction Marcuse took for a more emancipated psyche manifest in his Utopian vision. As Ingram summarizes, Freud’s fundamental thesis “forgets that repression is relative to scarcity, and that surplus repression is a function of artificially induced scarcity.”<sup>1135</sup>

Further:

Given current levels of technological development, there is no reason to think that, with a more equitable distribution of wealth and a more modest standard of living, the need to work (and, therewith, the current level of surplus repression) might be reduced. Second, work need not be

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<sup>1131</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberton,” *Op. Cit.*, 39.

<sup>1132</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 239.

<sup>1133</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberton,” *Op. Cit.*, 40.

<sup>1134</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 239.

<sup>1135</sup> Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 100.



unpleasurable and alienated. Art and other forms of creative endeavor testify to the fact that productive activity can be inherently satisfying.<sup>1136</sup>

A movement in this direction would require a transcendence of the performance principle in conjunction with a radical revaluation of needs away from the productive momentum of goods and services within commodity capitalism. Technology deployed to reduce scarcity in concert with the dissolution of surplus (“false”) needs would significantly reduce the labor time requisite for human flourishing,<sup>1137</sup> maintaining the minimum, “basic” repression necessary for civilization’s continuation. Further, toil itself would no longer be wholly divorced from pleasure that, according to Freud’s pre-Marcusean reconfiguration, was necessarily antagonistic to pleasure that must be sublimated and repressed so *that* we can work and survive in concert with one another. Marcuse, on the contrary, saw no necessary disjunction between pleasure and toil in a world rid of surplus repression.

As I noted earlier, “Freud seems a most improbable basis on which to build a utopian social theory,”<sup>1138</sup> especially in light of the fact that Freud, himself, maintained that neither scarcity nor the repression forged of scarcity would ever be transcended. For instance, Freud, in discussing the possibility of a future Utopia, notes in *The Future of an Illusion*: “it is questionable if such a state of affairs can be realized. It seems rather that every civilization must be built upon coercion and renunciation of instinct.”<sup>1139</sup> In discussing the possibility that the Soviet Union would end repression by ending scarcity

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<sup>1136</sup> *Ibid.*, 100–101.

<sup>1137</sup> “There is little repression in primitive society because the satisfaction of basic survival needs does not yet require the efficient, rational production of an economic surplus,” *Ibid.* 102.

<sup>1138</sup> Vincent Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 130.

<sup>1139</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Civilization, Society and Religion: Group Psychology, Civilization and its Discontents and other Works* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 185.

and ushering in a radical egalitarianism, his response was a blunt: “that in my opinion is an illusion.”<sup>1140</sup> Nevertheless, as we’ve seen, Marcuse excavated a radical kernel within Freud and found, within Freud’s own theory, despite Freud’s pessimism to the contrary, the seed of a Utopian future:

Freud’s metapsychology here restores imagination to its rights. As a fundamental, independent mental process, phantasy has a truth value of its own - namely, the surmounting of the antagonistic human reality. Imagination envisions the reconciliation of the individual with the whole, of desire with realization, of happiness with reason.<sup>1141</sup>

As early as Marcuse’s 1937 essay, “Philosophy and Critical Theory,” Geoghegan notes that Marcuse was already pointing to “the potentially progressive role of fantasy in Marxism.”<sup>1142</sup> As Marcuse said, “the abyss between rational and present reality cannot be bridged by conceptual thought. In order to retain what is not yet present as a goal in the present, phantasy is required.”<sup>1143</sup> By the “rational,” here, I contend that Marcuse does *not* mean “technical rationality” or what passes *for* rationality in a pervasively irrational age. Rather, Marcuse is pitting an authentic, emancipated rationality against precisely that “present reality” which he will eventually come to equate with the “performance principle,” “one-dimensionality,” and the irrationality of the technological age, in general. The “conceptual thought” of the present reality, as we saw in his critique of positivism, lacks the tools requisite to engage that which is “not yet present” and, thus, Marcuse turned to “imagination” as a mode of precisely the sort of “negative thinking” that positivism inherently lacks; the only form of thinking with the potential to lead to radical social change precisely by its ability to de-obfuscate the indoctrinating structures

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<sup>1140</sup> *Ibid.* 358.

<sup>1141</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), 110.

<sup>1142</sup> Vincent Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism*, *Op. Cit.*, 129.

<sup>1143</sup> Marcuse, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, *Op. Cit.*, 154.

of this “present reality” and postulate a radically “Other.” Indebting himself to both Aristotle and Kant on this point, Marcuse highlighted “the power of the imagination to intuit that which is not there; to create novelty out of the given; to be free in the midst of unfreedom.”<sup>1144</sup> “Imagination,” “phantasy,” and “negative thinking,” in this sense, became complementary terms for Marcuse. As he said, “in a situation where such a future is a real possibility, phantasy is an important instrument in the task of continually holding the goal up to view.”<sup>1145</sup>

The “truth value” of fantasy has a wholly operational connotation here, namely, fantasy operates as means of de-obfuscating the indoctrinating structures of the present milieu, assessing their contingency rather than their purported necessity, by exposing the “antagonistic human reality” of the performance principle. The performance principle pits individual against individual (just as Peirce said the Gospel of Greed saw neighbor trampling on neighbor) in a mad scramble for goods and services conducive to the thriving of capital and the myth of static scarcity when, in fact, scarcity continues to be (potentially) limited by technological advance. It insists on the repression of desires in order to achieve those ends and supplants a radically free form of reason with the Weberian “technical rationality” of the modern age. Fantasy, as Marcuse suggests here, reconciles these antagonisms or, in other words, transcends the fundamental tenets of the performance principle itself. As such, fantasy now acts “in the service of the id and its ‘pleasure principle,’” championing “in various forms all that is most authentic in

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<sup>1144</sup> Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism*, *Op. Cit.*, 129.

<sup>1145</sup> Marcuse, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, *Op. Cit.*, 155.

humanity against the restrictions of the ‘performance principle,’ by returning “that which is repressed in the present.”<sup>1146</sup>

According to Marcuse, such a society would liberate the polymorphous potential inherent in sexuality, but in a sublimated form. Persons would not regress in their sexual behavior, although there would be much greater tolerance of sexual diversity. Rather, they would become more sensitive, loving, creative, and spontaneous. Their receptivity toward themselves and others would also be reflected in their caring attitude toward nature, as well as in the pleasurable aesthetics of their domestic and work environments.<sup>1147</sup>

Pleasure would be released from its surplus repression and sublimated, as it was before, but in a manner commensurate with the forms of labor<sup>1148</sup> required in a much simpler standard of living<sup>1149</sup> emancipated from the universe of surplus goods and services conducive only to the capitalistic interests of the Establishment. Inherent *in* this emancipation of *eros* is a revaluation of needs away from commodity fetishism and towards creativity and sensitivity for oneself, others and nature, in general. However, this “communal reconciliation with others would not mark a dissolution of selfhood in a nirvanic, totalitarian oneness. Instead, a nonrepressive individuality would emerge that would preserve the accomplishments of technological and formal rationality within the framework of an ‘aestheticized’ instinctual rationality,” a kind of “*sensuous reason*”<sup>1150</sup> would replace the oppressive forms of “technical reason.” However, as we noted before, Marcuse was not advocating the dissolution of technology for it is *through* technology that scarcity and poverty are minimized and, ideally, outright dissolved, a further

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<sup>1146</sup> Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism*, *Op. Cit.*, 131.

<sup>1147</sup> Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 101.

<sup>1148</sup> “In such conditions work, technology, and art intermesh; absent a rational division of labor, persons remain integrated, unalienated ‘wholes,’” *Ibid.* 102.

<sup>1149</sup> “A simpler life with a lower standard of living” *Ibid.*

<sup>1150</sup> *Ibid.* 101.

“reduction of labor time to a minimum.”<sup>1151</sup> The only aspect of primitive society that Marcuse would see us “return to” is that of a lower standard of living demanding less repression. Beyond this, however, Marcuse’s Utopian vision was forward-looking for “primitive societies are, in some sense, more repressive than their advanced counterparts” in the sense that “the susceptibility of persons living in such societies, to *early* and often *painful* deaths, inherently lends their reality a repressive cast which is not lessened by the aesthetic, communal conditions of their existence,”<sup>1152</sup> thereby necessitating the perpetual advance of science and technology to address those earlier problems but emancipated from their indoctrinating function in the current milieu.

As a complement to Marcuse’s account of “fantasy,” “memory is the means to recapture earlier experiences of freedom and happiness...by showing that happiness once obtained” and, in so doing, “also raises the possibility of, and the desire for, future satisfaction.”<sup>1153</sup> Just as “fantasy” maintained its own operational “truth value” for Marcuse, so, too, did memory:

Its truth value lies in the specific function of memory to preserve promises and potentialities which are betrayed and even outlawed by the mature, civilized individual, but which had once been fulfilled in his [sic] dim past and which are never entirely forgotten [. \_ .] Against the self-imposed restraint of the discoverer, the orientation of the past tends towards an orientation on the future. The *recherche du temps perdu* becomes the vehicle of future liberation.<sup>1154</sup>

As a complement to the truth-value of fantasy, memory operates by preserving “promises and the potentialities” that are negated in the modern, “civilized” age but had “once been fulfilled” in a bygone past. It is a past both social and individual: Marcuse linked “the

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<sup>1151</sup> *Ibid.* 102.

<sup>1152</sup> *Ibid.* 103.

<sup>1153</sup> Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism*, *Op. Cit.*, 132 – 133.

<sup>1154</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 33.

origin of the repressed individual” (which he called ontogenesis<sup>1155</sup>) with “the origin of the repressive civilization” (which he called phylogenesis<sup>1156</sup>) and it is the role of fantasy to preserve “the archetypes of the genus, the perpetual but repressed ideas of the collective and individual memory, the tabooed images of freedom.”<sup>1157</sup> On the individual level, it is an appeal to the freedom of youth, prior to the full integration of the individual into the performance principle. On the social level, just as Peirce noted that the individuals of “wider social feeling” were able to look at past manifestations of government to create the doubt and requisite tension for inquiry and change in comparison to the current authority, it is an appeal to previous incarnations of administration, prior to the indoctrinating effects of technical rationality. It is no wonder, then, that Marcuse was alive to the rampant “counterrevolution” of the Establishment that militates against memory’s role in this way: on the individual level, we see the all-pervasive insistence on the repression of childlike desire satisfaction in favor of efficiency and productivity in the status quo and, on the social level, we see manifestations of rampant censorship and historical revisionism in an attempt to retroactively bring the past into an artificial alignment with the present administration. For example, if “memory” is a vehicle for emancipation, then “amnesia” is a vehicle for indoctrination. As Marcuse said, “the ability to forget is the mental faculty which sustains

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<sup>1155</sup> “The replacement of the pleasure principle by the reality principle is the great traumatic event in the development of man” in two primary stages, “ontogenetically” and “phylogenetically,” *ibid.*, 15. The formation of the reality principle, supplanting the pleasure principle, in the *individual* is “ontogenesis” which occurs “during the period of early childhood, and submission to the reality principle is enforced by the parents and other educators” and, subsequently, “submission is continually reproduced,” *ibid.* Interesting to note is how this resonates with the Frankfurt School’s study of the “Authoritarian Personality” that I discussed previously.

<sup>1156</sup> The replacement of the pleasure principle by the reality principle in the development man on the level of the “genus” is “phylogenesis.” “Phylogenetically, it occurs first in the *primal horde*, when the *primal father* monopolizes power and pleasure and enforces renunciation on the part of the sons,” *ibid.*, 15. This parallels the development of the authoritarian powers seen in both Marcuse and Peirce or, in King’s words, the rise of the “power majority.”

<sup>1157</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

submissiveness and renunciation.”<sup>1158</sup> Marcuse invoked Adorno’s warning against “the spectre of man without memory” achieved precisely through the sorts of historical revisionism both Marcuse and Peirce discuss or, as Geoghegan puts it, “as bourgeois society seeks to neutralize history.”<sup>1159</sup> In short, “by forgetting one both loses the imagery of liberation and forgives that which should not be forgiven,”<sup>1160</sup> perpetuating one’s complete immersion in the indoctrinating effects of one-dimensional society. As Marcuse said:

Phantasy [...] retains the structure and the tendencies of the psyche prior to its organization by the reality, prior to its becoming an ‘individual’ set off against other individuals. And by the same token, like the id to which it remains committed, imagination preserves the ‘memory’ of the subhistorical past when the life of the individual was the life of the genus,

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<sup>1158</sup> *Ibid.*, 163. Interesting to note, Nietzsche took an opposing position on memory in extolling the virtues of forgetfulness, noting, for example, “there is a degree of sleeplessness, of rumination, of the historical sense, which is harmful and ultimately fatal to the living thing,” Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” in *Untimely Meditations*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale, edited by Daniel Breazale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 62. Further, man “...braces himself against the great and ever greater pressure of what is past: it pushes him down or bends him sideways, it encumbers his steps as a dark, invisible burden,” *ibid.*, 61. As John Fritz notes, for Nietzsche, “when we remember *too much*, our pasts can hinder us; the future is annihilated, and the present only exists in constant reference to our memories” creating an individual who “is unable to fully embrace the present and the future in a robust and healthy way,” John Fritz, “Pete, Peggy, Don, and the Dialectic of Remembering and Forgetting,” in *Mad Men and Philosophy*, edited by Rod Carveth and James B. South (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 54. Conversely, Nietzsche “connects the idea of forgetting with happiness, strength, and vitality,” *ibid.*, 57. As Nietzsche notes: “it is always the same thing that makes happiness: the ability to forget,” Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” *Op. Cit.*, 62. The crux of the matter as it applies to Marcuse’s observations here is, as Nietzsche noted, “to be incapable of taking one’s enemies, one’s accidents, even one’s misdeeds seriously for very long – that is the sign of strong, full natures in whom there is an excess of the power to form, to mold, to recuperate, and to forget...such a man shakes off with a *single* shrug many vermin that eat deep into others,” Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, translated and edited by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), first essay, 10, 39. Marcuse responded to this Nietzschean position directly, in fact, though not so much by way of refutation as it was by way of lamentation that Nietzsche’s analysis of forgetting, though contingent, was nevertheless the prevalent manifestation: “Nietzsche saw in the training of memory the beginning of civilized morality – especially the memory of obligations, contracts, dues. This context reveals the one-sidedness of memory-training in civilization: the faculty was chiefly directed toward remembering duties rather than pleasures; memory was linked with bad conscience, guilt, and sin. Unhappiness and the threat of punishment, not happiness and the promise of freedom, linger in memory,” Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 232. Ultimately, Marcuse warned, “if the past is just left behind and forgotten, there will be no end to destructive transgression,” *ibid.*, 117.

<sup>1159</sup> Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism*, *Op. Cit.*, 134.

<sup>1160</sup> *Ibid.*

the image of the immediate unity between the universal and the particular under the rule of the pleasure principle.<sup>1161</sup>

In this way, the past (conjured by fantasy manifest in memory) is a “vehicle of future liberation.” An individual looks to the past, both that individual’s own and the past of society in general, brings it into contrast with the present, and uses that tension to both reveal the obfuscated structures and faux necessity of the performance principle and postulate an idealized future to work towards.

Indeed, there *was* a sense in which Marcuse was advocating a certain *type* of “regression.” For Freud, regression had no beneficial qualities and led, often enough, to a variety of debilitating mental illnesses. Conversely, for Marcuse, regression *before* and *beyond* the effects of the performance principle had an emancipatory connotation. Geoghegan, in his close analysis of the diverging emphases on “regression” in Freud and Marcuse, conjures a powerful analogy: Freud aligned himself with Paul who said: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things” for “the expression ‘savages or children’ flowed easily from Freud’s pen.”<sup>1162</sup> Marcuse, conversely, aligned himself with these iconic passages from the Gospel of Matthew: “except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Ultimately, for Marcuse, “a truly civilized society will have to regain those features which time and maturity have eradicated,”<sup>1163</sup> in a word, “regression,” by emancipated from the negative connotations in Freud’s own theory:

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<sup>1161</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 109.

<sup>1162</sup> Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism*, *Op. Cit.*, 135.

<sup>1163</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.



The emergence of a non-repressive reality principle involving instinctual liberation would *regress* behind the attained level of civilized rationality. This regression would be physical as well as social: it would reactivate early stages of the libido which were surpassed in the development of the reality ego, and it would dissolve the institutions of society in which the reality ego exists. In terms of these institutions, instinctual liberation is relapse into barbarism.<sup>1164</sup>

This was a tension in Marcuse, as Ingram notes, “in the final analysis, Marcuse seems torn between the allure of a simpler, less-developed (but also less wasteful and less destructive) society, and a more technologically advanced one.”<sup>1165</sup> Marcuse’s critique of technology was at the heart of this dilemma. On the one hand, as we’ve seen, the lower standard of living in less-developed societies diminishes repression, heteronomy, and the destruction of natural resources. On the other hand, such primitive stages of civilization were also far more at the mercy of natural forces that lead to death and suffering on a sometimes-massive scale. The only viable solution, I argue, would be the emancipation of technology from its capitalistic moorings but *without* the reduction of its advancement and efficacy, returning it to its instrumental function under human control and aimed specifically at the goals of eliminating scarcity, poverty, disease and suffering, thereby emancipating humans from surplus labor time and surplus repression while preserving the integrity of their lives freed from disease and unnecessary suffering. In conjunction with this return to a type of *benevolent* instrumental value, technology, too, as I’ve said, could be applied in its productive capacity provided technical rationality has been dissolved and supplanted with a new rationality dictating the trajectory of technology towards pleasure, beauty, and emancipation rather than efficiency, indoctrination, and alienation.

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<sup>1164</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 143.

<sup>1165</sup> Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.* 103.

Marcuse, as we've seen, transplanted his Utopian hopes from a working class made impotent by the onslaught of commodity culture towards a rising revolutionary sentiment in university students. It is here that this dialectical tension between values and society comes to the fore. As we've seen, commodity capitalism alters the trajectory of higher education for two fundamental reasons: (1) efficiency *is* rationality and integration into the machine of capital becomes the goal directing the types of degrees students are told to receive, and (2), the humanities and the liberal arts are bastions of the type of critical or negative thinking that threaten to undermine the Establishment's hold on power. "The prevailing mode of enculturation in the United States" is "education *to alienation* and to single-dimensionality."<sup>1166</sup> Marcuse argued that the values cultivated in higher education should be antithetical to enculturation into a milieu of alienation and indoctrination but, as with childhood education, this creates an individual whose survival is threatened if the milieu in question is hostile to negative thinking. Students need to spearhead the transmutation of this milieu of values away from commodity fetishism, but the milieu of commodity fetishism must change in order to allow the humanities, the liberal arts, and the immersion in negative thinking to flourish. As a result, as we saw, Marcuse noted the realm of negative thinking in higher education continued to dissipate and the possibility for radical social change along with it as the realm of education, like the working class, succumbed to desublimation.

Indeed, there was a corollary between Marcuse's critique of education in the one-dimensional society and his observations on the role of memory in emancipation. There *is* memory in capitalism, but like all things its emancipatory power has been desublimated and streamlined into a reification of the status quo. Negative thinking gives way to rote

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<sup>1166</sup> Reitz, *Art, Liberation, and the Humanities: A Critical Engagement with Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 7.

memorization, a recollection of facts and data that reify the mandates of the Establishment. “So far as memory is cultivated, it is in the repressive form of memorizing the requirements of the capitalist order.”<sup>1167</sup> Further, beyond the data and instructions that memory is aimed towards (“the one-sidedness of memory-training in civilization”<sup>1168</sup>) is likewise a repressive factor in conjuring not the *freedoms* of the past, but the *sins* that individuals are taught to adopt and associate with themselves in order to keep them submissive, docile, and guilt, where “the faculty was chiefly directed toward remembering duties rather than pleasures; memory was linked with bad conscience, guilt and sin. Unhappiness and the threat of punishment, not happiness and the promise of freedom, linger in memory.”<sup>1169</sup>

Integral to his conception of radical higher education is the students’ immersion in the arts, formulating “a particular approach to *aesthetic education* and a unique version of *philosophical humanism* that he then presents as *critical theory* against the debilitating paradoxes that he sees at the core of our single-dimensional culture,”<sup>1170</sup> including “alienation in the mist of affluence, repression through gratification, and the overstimulation and paralysis of mind.”<sup>1171</sup> Art is, by its very nature, part and parcel with negative thinking and, as such, must play a critical role in higher education.

Marcuse’s interest in aesthetics had been present since his very first publication, his dissertation, *Der deutsche Künstlerroman (The German Artist Novel)*, which he completed in 1922. From that first text on, as Kellner notes, “culture and art played an important role in shaping forces of domination, as well as generating possibilities of

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<sup>1167</sup> Goeghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism*, *Op. Cit.*, 134.

<sup>1168</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 163.

<sup>1169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1170</sup> Reitz, *Art, Liberation, and the Humanities: A Critical Engagement with Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 9.

<sup>1171</sup> *Ibid.*

liberation”<sup>1172</sup> maintaining Marcuse’s familiar dialectical analysis. Further, throughout his long career, “at key junctures...art, the aesthetic dimension, and the relation between culture and politics became a central focus of his writings.”<sup>1173</sup> To what degree art featured in Marcuse’s critical theory waxed and waned throughout his career but never wholly vanished from his work. Further, as Kellner mentions here, the “relation between culture and politics” and “art” changes (or, as I will argue, “evolves”) throughout his career, specifically on the issue of what role art is meant to play in the revolutionary movement: should art be as distanced from politics and culture as possible so as to retain its position as a “higher perspective” which *inspires* radical political action and staves off the desublimating effects of consumer culture or, conversely, should art be *intimately* involved in radical political action *directly*, though it runs the risk of being easily co-opted by precisely the same structures it attempts to transcend.

Working under Philip Witkop, a professor of literature with a focus on German poetry, Marcuse completed his dissertation in 1922. Although Marcuse never cited Hegel by name, the great German theorist’s fingerprints are ubiquitously dispersed throughout the entirety of Marcuse’s text,<sup>1174</sup> specifically in the structure of the argument itself. Like Hegel, Marcuse “delineated a progression and development of literary forms emerging out of interaction and sometimes conflict with each other,”<sup>1175</sup> demonstrating Marcuse’s

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<sup>1172</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 1.

<sup>1173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1174</sup> “*The German Artist Novel* contains a Hegelian structure and rhythm that prefigure Marcuse’s later appropriation of Hegel’s dialectical method: in each chapter, after sympathetically examining the portraying a type of artist novel and artistic life, Marcuse discloses the contradictions and deficiencies in the novels or writers under consideration. He then shows how the problems with various forms and types of the novel give rise to competing positions – which in turn contain their own contradictions and deficiencies and give rise to further development,” *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>1175</sup> *Ibid.*

first manifestation of the dialectical method<sup>1176</sup> that he would continue to champion throughout his long career.

In this early text, Marcuse analyzed the tension between the “artistic calling and the demands of everyday life,”<sup>1177</sup> namely, “the novel articulates individual longing and striving for a higher, more authentic mode of existence.”<sup>1178</sup> To frame it in Peircean language, the individual of “wider social feeling,” the artist here, finds him or herself at odds with the demands of the current milieu which has become antagonistic to the artist’s pursuits and the artist, thus, experiences a profound sense of alienation.<sup>1179</sup> This sense of alienation, depicted in the German artist novel, creates the primary tension that Marcuse would, himself, wrestle with throughout the entirety of his career: the artist deals with his or her alienation by either striving to transform society (political activity) into the type of society wherein the artist would no longer feel alienated or, conversely, recedes into the safety and security of a beautiful, imagined but ultimately ostracized, world.

We see shades<sup>1180</sup> of the relationship between art and negative thinking that would manifest more explicitly later in Marcuse’s career: the artist’s sense of alienation concurrently conjures both a picture of society *as it is* wherein the artist cannot find a home and, too, postulates a world conjured by fantasy and imagination of a society *which is not yet* and the question for the artist then becomes whether or not such a aesthetic

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<sup>1176</sup> “Marcuse learned to think and write dialectically in his doctoral dissertation before he had fully appropriated materialistic dialectics,” *Ibid.*

<sup>1177</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>1178</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>1179</sup> “The problem underlying the genre is therefore the alienation of the individual, and especially the artist, from bourgeois society, and the subsequent fragmentation of life and lack of a harmonious community,” *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>1180</sup> “This notion of art previews later works such as *Eros and Civilization* and *The Aesthetic Dimension*, where Marcuse develops a theory of art as a revelation of utopian images of fulfillment and happiness that rejects an oppressive and alienated world,” *Ibid.*, 9.

society *can* be achieved and whether or not the artist ought to engage in political activity in an attempt to make it so (or, simply, recede from society). As Marcuse said:

When the artist, who had demanded that the private self had a right to a life of its own, then steps out into the surrounding world, he endures the curse of a culture in which Idea and reality, art and life, subject and object, stand in start opposition to one another. He finds no fulfillment in the surrounding world's forms of life with all their limitations; his authentic self (*Wesen*) and his desires find no resonance there; in solitude he stands against reality. Here is where the artist novel sets itself to work. Here the artist seeks somehow to come to grips with his painful twoness, which pits his essential being as an artist (*sein Künstlertum*) against the surrounding world, which is not allowing him to find satisfaction in its forms of life. Somehow a solution, a new unity, must be found, because this contradiction is so painful that in the long run it is unbearable without destroying the artist and humanity...the artist must overcome this twoness: he must be able to configure a type of life that can bind together what has been torn asunder, that pulls together the contradictions between spirit and sensuality, art and life, artists' values and those of the surrounding world...this is the fundamental problem and theme of the artist novel: it generally presents us with the attempt of an artist to reconcile this dichotomy in some manner.<sup>1181</sup>

Marcuse even presented this dilemma in a naturalistic language reminiscent of Peirce:

“from the very beginning here it is a question of assuaging some irritation from the surrounding world, bridging a gap, reconciling opposites, attempting to regain balance and equilibrium.”<sup>1182</sup>

This tension corresponds with an intriguing distinction that Marcuse highlighted between two types of artist novel, the “realistic-objective”<sup>1183</sup> and the “romantic.”<sup>1184</sup> In the former, “the artist acknowledges that the world's contemporary surroundings are the

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<sup>1181</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *German Artist Novel*, trans. C. Reitz in *The Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, vol. 4, *Art and Liberation*, ed. Douglas Kellner (Routledge: New York, 2007), 78. “Essence” or “being” might be a better translation here than “authentic self” in light of existential connotations “authenticity” carries.

<sup>1182</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 80.

<sup>1183</sup> Marcuse, *The German Artist Novel*, *Op. Cit.*, 79.

<sup>1184</sup> *Ibid.*

basis of his artistry, yet he seeks to transform, transfigure, and renew them.”<sup>1185</sup> In the latter, “the romantic artist...finds it impossible to see even any potential satisfaction within the frame of the world’s given conditions: he thus flees into an otherworldly idealist dreamland, and constructs there his poeticized world of fulfillment.”<sup>1186</sup> The former represents Marcuse’s position that art has a *direct* impact on political activity which he will maintain in texts like *An Essay on Liberation* and *Eros and Civilization* whereas the latter represents Marcuse’s position that art has a more *indirect* impact on political activity, operating as more of an ideal for emulation and inspiration, that will manifest to *some* degree, in *The Aesthetic Dimension*.

Throughout *most* of his career,<sup>1187</sup> Marcuse kept his analysis of aesthetics intimately intertwined with his socio-political critique, whether art played a direct or an indirect role, in transforming society. It should then come as no surprise that Marcuse peppered this early text with a subtle critique of romanticism,<sup>1188</sup> the more subjective literary form that lead not to the transformation of objective reality but, instead, to the inward flight of the artist *away* from a hostile world.

Marcuse, in this early text, tended to side with the representations of the objective-realist camp over and against the quietism of the romantics as he did for the majority of his career. His analysis of Goethe, for example, culminated in Marcuse’s championing of the heroic figures in Goethe’s work that progress “further toward overcoming artistic subjectivism and alienation”<sup>1189</sup> through the protagonists’ integration

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<sup>1185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1187</sup> With the exception of *The Aesthetic Dimension*, which I will discuss shortly.

<sup>1188</sup> Marcuse, for Kellner, was critical of “excessive romantic subjectivism and idealism,” Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 11.

<sup>1189</sup> *Ibid.*

into society, the “shaping” of one’s “personality according to an ideal of humanity.”<sup>1190</sup> As Kellner notes, Marcuse used Goethe “to criticize romanticism and tendencies” that “championed art over life, the artist over common humanity. Throughout the study, Marcuse criticized romantic idealist fantasies, ineffectual strivings, and the various failures of romantic artists” especially “the romantic tendency to withdraw from everyday reality and to create ideal fantasy worlds, as well as the romantic belief that the artist is the highest form of human reality.”<sup>1191</sup> As Bronner notes:

This illusion projects a transcendent utopia. But, believing that happiness can exist internally and independent of the actual external conditions which prevail, artworks of this type can abrogate their critical function in sociopolitical terms and perhaps even help perpetuate the given state of affairs.<sup>1192</sup>

In this early text, Marcuse was far more sympathetic to the role of art as more direct and immediate upon radical social change, going so far as to that that “art itself became a weapon” in “service to the revolutionary tendencies”<sup>1193</sup> of the Young Germany movement. Against quietism and the flight inward of the romantic movement, Marcuse was quite clear that the doctrine “art for art’s sake,” which he attributed to the artistic response to the rise of modern capitalism that increasingly co-opted the artistic endeavour and alienated the artistic temperament, lead to nothing but “suffering, misery, and frequent collapse” by championing “art over life.”<sup>1194</sup> This powerful critique of the

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<sup>1190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1191</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>1192</sup> Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, *Op. Cit.*, 113.

<sup>1193</sup> Marcuse, *The German Artist Novel*, *Op. Cit.*, 14.

<sup>1194</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 14.



“aesthete” was concretized when he noted, “something always remains unfulfilled” in these individuals, namely, “their humanity.”<sup>1195</sup> As he said:

Those who seek only aesthetic charms...who are forced to become constantly conscious spectators of their own life can never step out of their egocentricity...for them, every human activity and togetherness is prohibited...life only has meaning and value when it is seen through the medium of art, is transformed into art.<sup>1196</sup>

Consciousness divorced from external conditions, especially within the advanced industrial society, creates, as we discussed previously, the “happy consciousness” of euphoria in ignorance, making individuals “complacent to the point where they will lose the desire for emancipatory change and so come to terms with the existing order and its evils”<sup>1197</sup> by taking comfort in a wholly divorced, “inner realm” of their own, personal, illusion of freedom. Further, for the mass of mankind within such societies, the dissociated inner realm of freedom and phantasy isn’t even maintained, even in this impotent form, but incorporated into the *status quo* through all the processes of desire manipulation articulated in *One-Dimensional Man*. As Marcuse said, this “happy consciousness” is flung “back upon itself” on the individual with it “learn to bear, and in a certain sense, to love his isolation.”<sup>1198</sup> Thus, even the individual with a wider sort of social feeling, the creative, the imaginative individual, may take so much solace in his or her own isolated inner realm of freedom and phantasy, that in describing him or herself *as* the outlier, the rebel, the deviant, seeks solace in that identification alone, in contrast to an established order, and makes no move to bring about any form of radical social change.

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<sup>1195</sup> Marcuse, *The German Artist Novel*, *Op. Cit.*, 14.

<sup>1196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1197</sup> Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, *Op. Cit.*, 113.

<sup>1198</sup> Marcuse, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, *Op. Cit.*, 122.

Thus, as Kellner rightly concludes, though Marcuse from the start linked art with radical social change, in no way was his early position anything but “critical of aesthetic escapism.”<sup>1199</sup> Intriguingly, it was not a rejection *of* bourgeois values that Marcuse championed in that early text, but a “reconciliation of the artistic life with bourgeois society”<sup>1200</sup> which he saw in the work of Thomas Mann. “Accommodation with the bourgeois world was possible, Mann suggests, through pursuing writing as a bourgeois profession, exemplifying the values of conscientiousness, professionalism, and creativity (*SI*, pp. 322ff).”<sup>1201</sup> This integration of the artist and bourgeois society was not a submission to the mores and indoctrinated beliefs of the *status quo* but, rather, the integration of the radically artistic mind into the milieu directly, for “if the writer can become an educator and ethical force within bourgeois society, he has overcome his alienation...is once more an integrated member of society,”<sup>1202</sup> and can, from within, change the structures of the system without succumbing to them. As Marcuse said, “the artistic existence and bourgeois society are no longer two life-forms, two essentially opposed unities, but the artist is integrated into the bourgeois world, art and life are united, with the result that the problematic of the artist novel is no longer acute.”<sup>1203</sup> But Marcuse, perhaps foreshadowing his Freudian-Marxist phase, cautioned the reader to behold Mann’s protagonist Gustav von Ashenbach who, in *Death in Venice*, fails to completely integrate himself into the cultural mores of a society that demands the repression of precisely those libidinal tendencies the artist would otherwise unleash.

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<sup>1199</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 15.

<sup>1200</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>1201</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1203</sup> Marcuse, *The German Artist Novel*, *Op. Cit.*, 17.

Lastly, Marcuse highlighted the necessity of a “community” (*Gemeinschaft*) within which the artist may thrive. It is, in many ways, only the postulation of such an ideal community, shades of Peirce’s own. For Marcuse, however, it was not the ideal community of *inquirers*, per se, but an ideal community where the antagonisms wrought by capital and commodity are dissolved: a community wherein the artist is no longer alienated precisely because there are no inhibitions mandated by the Establishment to curb the artist’s expression and immersion in beauty and pleasure. As Marcuse said:

But the living and artistic working out of this experience – the epical life and shaping of art – demands always and everywhere a presupposition: the presence of an organic and meaningful (*sinnhaltig*) form-of-life, unified and carrying its own values – a ‘community’ (*Gemeinschaft*) in the most extreme and deepest sense. It is the solid and fruitful ground out of which great epics rose, in which the resigned (*entsagend*) artist can perform a proper and fulfilling adjustment (*Einordnung*). *SI*, pp. 329 – 330.<sup>1204</sup>

We see shades here of many of the themes Marcuse would articulate throughout his later career. There is the postulation of a community *other* than the modern state of capital, one which carries “its own values” that are in stark contrast to the values of commodity and modernity. A community wherein art and life are not in opposition, but mutually coordinated and fulfilled, where labor is expressed in art, and art expressed in labor, effectively dissolving the alienation the protagonists throughout all of the novels Marcuse discussed here experience to some degree. “For the German artist novel, the community is not something given, but given up and something to strive for (*etwas Aufgegebenes*). *SI*, p. 333).” Marcuse invoked both a nod to ages past where he maintained the artist was less alienated from a community that was more accepting of the artistic life (ancient Greece) and, too, the hypothetical community yet to come, something to “strive for,” the

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<sup>1204</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

goal yet to be achieved operating, in a sense akin to Peirce, as a heuristic device against which we can fruitfully compare the present milieu in order to de-obfuscate the negative tendencies therein and move ourselves towards the ideal community yet to be. This is a theme present in all of Marcuse's work and it is fascinating to see it manifest here at so early a stage in his intellectual development. In sum, in this early text, Marcuse was alive to art's role in radical social change, articulating the tension between the artist's two choices: (a) to integrate him or herself into society or (b) to recede from society into a beautiful illusory world of his or her own. Precisely because of his constant critique of the latter (the form of the German artist novel he qualified as the "romantic") and a tendency to side with the attempts of the "objective-realist" protagonists, at least in this early work, Marcuse saw the possibility that the artist had an obligation to integrate him or herself into the current milieu and change it from within, offering a more direct and immediate application of art to radical social change that will be quite different than the position he will hold at the end of his career.

After beginning work with the Frankfurt School in 1934, Marcuse shifted the focus of his research to the ways in which the Establishment may utilize art in order to further indoctrination and alienation rather than, as was the focus of his dissertation, the ways in which the artist struggled with an otherwise stifling milieu. As Kellner notes, "one aspect of a critical theory of art is to delineate how it serves to advance oppression and domination. But for Marcuse, a critical theory also depicts the positive emancipatory and utopian features of cultural phenomena that can advance the cause of human liberation, helping to create a free and happier life."<sup>1205</sup> We've seen this manifest throughout Marcuse's long career, stemming from his unique utilization of "negative

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<sup>1205</sup> Kellner, "Marcuse, Art, and Liberation," *Op. Cit.*, 21.

thinking” which functions, as we’ve explored, both to illuminate the otherwise obfuscated tendencies of indoctrination and alienation by postulating *that which is not*, a negation of the current milieu which necessarily entails speculations about a possible utopian society. As Kellner rightly summarizes, “a critical theory of art is thus a dialectical one, criticizing negative features and articulating positive ones. It analyzes art within specific social formations and develops utopian notions of art and liberation that show art can have emancipatory potential and effects within specific social conjunctures.”<sup>1206</sup>

The most significant text of the 30’s that dealt with this two-fold notion of art as both indoctrinating and emancipatory was his paper “The Affirmative Character of Culture” in 1937. There, Marcuse anticipated many of the themes that would manifest later in *One-Dimensional Man*, including a proto-form of “artificial desublimation” and the “reification” of the mores of an oppressive milieu. As Kellner notes:

The concept ‘affirmative culture’ for Marcuse refers to the culture of the bourgeois epoch. Affirmative culture projected its spiritual realm as a higher, more sublime, and valuable realm than the everyday world and claimed its values were crucial to the individual’s well-being...affirming a superior realm of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, where one could find the most stable and lasting happiness.<sup>1207</sup>

To all this Marcuse would heartily agree: philosophy, art, the humanities in general, are realms of education and culture he would always champion, noting these as sites of negative/dialectical thinking. However, Marcuse was likewise alive to the manifestation of bourgeois culture in the 30’s which had taken on its own peculiar ideology “whereby

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<sup>1206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1207</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

the values of culture became allegedly accessible to each individual,”<sup>1208</sup> in his words, offering a “realm of apparent unity and apparent freedom in which the antagonistic relations of existence were supposed to be stabilized and pacified,”<sup>1209</sup> in a sense, offering the sort of “community” without antagonism that was the central focus of his dissertation.

Along *with* the otherwise positive aspects of bourgeois society (philosophy, art, Truth, Beauty, and the rest), “affirmative culture...helps stabilize and preserve bourgeois society” *along with* “its system of production,”<sup>1210</sup> indoctrination, and alienation. This affirmative culture *affirms* the superiority of the bourgeois milieu, both the aspects Marcuse would champion along with all those he readily rejected as part and parcel of an entire milieu. It served “an escapist function by allowing the individual to transcend the toil...of the everyday world and attain a higher spiritual realm that provides a refuge from

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<sup>1208</sup> *Ibid.*, 24. This early paper made no mention of the Nazi use of art, though this was a topic he’d return to later in his career. In an interview with Larry Hartwick in 1978, Hartwick asked Marcuse whether or not “the philosopher has a primary critical function that the artist may or may not have” to which Marcuse replied in the affirmative, namely, that philosophers are capable of a level of social critique that art cannot encompass, noting that art cannot “represent the extreme horror in the prevailing reality. We have here a good example, namely, the Holocaust,” Herbert Marcuse and Larry Hartwick, “On *The Aesthetic Dimension*: A Conversation between Herbert Marcuse and Larry Hartwick,” in *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, vol. 4, *Art and Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 221. Hartwick’s follow-up question, citing Marcuse interest in Leni Riefenstahl whom, Marcuse claimed in *The Aesthetic Dimension*, had “filmed the beauty of a fascist feast” (*ibid.*), whether Marcuse thought it was “possible to find art in a fascist form?” Marcuse responded by saying: “yes – as exiled art and hidden art – but in no other way. I have asked this question myself many times, also, in the form: is there such a thing as fascist art? And I think I would like to deny it, but I must confess that one has probabl to reformulate the question, because you cannot deny that there is literature produced by writers with strong proto-fascist features, at least utterly reactionary ones – the case of Dostoevsky, the case of Yeats...so, it is possible that a distinct reactionary and a repressive authoritarian can produce authentic literature. The question is: under what historical conditions?,” *ibid.* Hartwick pushes Marcuse further on this point: “but there was a certain manipulation of conceptions of beauty in Nazi Germany, which may have been simply a devaluation of the aesthetic handed to it, of the tradition of art before it. But it did try to take the idea of an aesthetic form and call that art and in the process deny the Eros principle which underlies your own definition of the aesthetic,” to which Marcuse replied, “tt is a realism that conceals, that hides what reality actually is. And that, of course, is opposed to the very essence of art. Art should reveal and not conceal,” *ibid.*

<sup>1209</sup> Herbert Marcuse, “The Affirmative Character of Culture,” trans. Jeremy Shapiro, in *Collected Papers*, vol. 4, *Art and Liberation*, ed. Douglas Kellner (New York, NY: Routledge), 88.

<sup>1210</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 24.

the suffering and uncertainty of everyday life,”<sup>1211</sup> culminating in the type of “romanticism” and “quietism” that Marcuse critiqued in *The German Artist Novel*. This idealization, highly contrived in a society that did *in fact* maintain social strife, alienating labor, and immense suffering from the working class and the impoverished, effectively created a “veil that covers” these “social antagonisms and contradictions”<sup>1212</sup> and to obfuscate the antagonisms and contradictions is to dissolve precisely the sort of dialectical thinking that Marcuse would champion throughout his career. Thus, Marcuse concluded that bourgeois society’s “affirmative culture contains both repressive and compensatory functions.”<sup>1213</sup> On the one hand, as Marcuse explored at length in *Eros and Civilization*, bourgeois society demands the sublimation of sensuality which would be “subversive” to the “demands of the capitalist economy for a disciplined, hard-working labor force,” while offering a “tranquilizing balm” in the form of its idealization of love which “provides escape into a higher spiritual world.”<sup>1214</sup> In essence, it demanded profound unfreedom in the outer realm and placated the individual by offering escapism into a profoundly free *inner* realm of beauty and pleasure, not wholly unlike the “euphoria” experienced within the culture of commodity fetishism Marcuse would later express in *One-Dimensional Man*. Effectively, by locating freedom in an inner realm of escapism into beauty and art, much like Marcuse’s critique of the romantic artist novel, the focus shifts from the objectivity of lived reality into a pure subjectivity wherein individuals come to see themselves in isolation from their fellows and any sense of community and solidarity (the goal of the artist in Marcuse’s dissertation and the goal of

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<sup>1211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1213</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>1214</sup> *Ibid.*

his utopian critical theory in general) is dissolved. As Kellner notes, “bourgeois culture isolates individuals in their cultivated subjectivity, and it submits them to the domination of the repressive powers that rule the existing society.”<sup>1215</sup> Akin to a kind of Peircean society under the aegis of authority, or, perhaps, a type of Sartrean “seriality,” there is no *authentic* “group-in-fusion” here, no authentic community of free inquirers, but a false sense of community wherein the individuals are indoctrinated into submitting to the mores of the repressive powers, focusing not on their solidarity with their fellows, but their own subjectivity, the only realm of freedom left to them. It “induces the individual to escape from the problems of social existence in the space of subjectivity,” like Peirce’s ostrich, this escape does not dissolve the problems of social existence, it simply creates a quietism wherein those problems will go unnoticed and unaddressed, in effect, reifying them and perpetuating them to the benefit of these “repressive powers.”

However, in effectively maintaining the *positive* aspects of bourgeois culture, namely, “humanity, goodness, joy, truth, and solidarity”<sup>1216</sup> in this inner, higher realm of culture, the bourgeois culture, itself, made the tension requisite for the possibility of radical social change by preserving these qualities and perpetuating the longings for them. As Marcuse said, “only in art has bourgeois society tolerated its own ideals and taken them seriously as a general demand. What counts as utopia, phantasy, and rebellion in the world of fact is allowed in art.”<sup>1217</sup> Here, Marcuse began to move away from the objective-realist demand that the artist ought to strive for a *direct* change to the social environment through radical practice to art operating now as an ideal, separate from the realm of radical practice, as inspiration *for* radical social change rather than a direct

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<sup>1215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1216</sup> Marcuse, “The Affirmative Character of Culture,” *Op. Cit.*, 100.

<sup>1217</sup> *Ibid.*



instrument of it. “Pushed to the margins of society,”<sup>1218</sup> the “artistry of the beautiful body, its effortless agility and relaxation, which can be displayed today only in the circus, vaudeville, and burlesque”<sup>1219</sup> create joy, when seen, in individuals who can anticipate what it would like to attain such pleasures in their everyday experience, “liberated from the ideal.”<sup>1220</sup> These individuals of “wider social feeling,” we might say, see in art, on the margins of society and *not* in their everyday activities, an ideal to which to strive, a fusion of pleasure and toil the likes of which Marcuse will champion later in his career in discussing the “new sensibility” wherein the aesthetic realm, this marginalia, is integrated into labor after Weberian technical rationality is dissolved.

However, as Marcuse noted here, it was not long before this industrialized manifestation of bourgeois culture in advanced capitalism began to notice the potentially subversive elements of this marginalized, idealized realm, and began to militate against it.<sup>1221</sup> As capitalism’s strength increased, and commodity fetishism proliferated, so, too, did it increase the demand for “total mobilization”<sup>1222</sup> of the individual within the work force, including the time spent in this inner and marginalized realm of art and beauty. The

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<sup>1218</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 25.

<sup>1219</sup> Marcuse, “The Affirmative Character of Culture,” *Op. Cit.*, 101.

<sup>1220</sup> *Ibid.* It is not wholly clear what Marcuse means by “ideal” here in reference to a need to be liberated from it. Perhaps a key to understanding this use of the term “ideal” can be found in an earlier passage where Marcuse said: “The cultural ideal assimilated men’s longing for a happier life: for humanity, goodness, joy, truth, and solidarity. Only, in this ideal, they are all furnished with the affirmative accent of belonging to a higher, purer, nonprosaic world. They are either internalized as the duty of the individual soul (to achieve what is constantly betrayed in the external existence of the whole) or represented as objects of art (whereby their reality is relegated to a realm essentially different from that of everyday life),” *Ibid.*, 100. If the ideal, noble in itself, is only and ever kept *as* an ideal, then “reality is relegated” to this “ideal,” a realm “essentially different from that of everyday life.” To liberate ourselves from an ideal may be read not as ridding ourselves of the *content* of the ideal (here an admixture of an aesthetic ideal permeating and constructing a socio-political ideal where the two are no longer antagonistic) but the acquiescence that it must remain *only* an ideal. That is to say, to liberate ourselves from an ideal may be read as a call to make manifest in lived reality the content of that ideal.

<sup>1221</sup> “Marcuse claimed that the new situation of monopoly capitalism...could not even tolerate this sphere of private life that was the source of potential opposition and subversion,” Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 25.

<sup>1222</sup> Marcuse, “The Affirmative Character of Culture,” *Op. Cit.*, 107.

use of the term “total mobilization” anticipated his critique of one-dimensional society, specifically, the ubiquitous and omnipresent nature of technical rationality and capitalism’s ability to infiltrate into every aspect of the individual’s life. Slowly, Marcuse noted, the adversary to emancipation and pleasure was no longer bourgeois society, per se, which maintained ideals of truth, beauty, and art, but the system of “capitalist labor...and the totalitarian state” that “demanded an abolition of the individualistic, humanistic elements in bourgeois culture that were potentially oppositional.”<sup>1223</sup> Capitalism began to militate even against the inner realm of freedom preserved by bourgeois high culture, demanding “renunciation and subjection to the status quo, made bearable” not through escape from the everyday world of toil and labor, but “by the real appearance of gratification”<sup>1224</sup> in the goods and services the system of commodity fetishism and capital provided, directly anticipating his critique in *One-Dimensional Man*.

The bourgeoisie, Marcuse claimed, came to manifest a “deep contempt for the mind,”<sup>1225</sup> as Kellner notes, a profound distrust of “intellectual activity,”<sup>1226</sup> which anticipated Marcuse’s radical pedagogy wherein he noted the transformation of higher education from the early bourgeois pedagogy of values, the betterment of mankind, and the search for truth and beauty, into degrees and technical training that produced efficient cogs in the machine of industry.

Thus, “affirmative culture” comes to *affirm* “the dominant cultural values of the bourgeoisie and ends up being affirmative toward the existing social order, quelling

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<sup>1223</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 26.

<sup>1224</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>1225</sup> Marcuse, “The Affirmative Character of Culture,” *Op. Cit.*, 108.

<sup>1226</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 25.

rebellious impulses and tranquilizing critical consciousness,”<sup>1227</sup> that is, deadening the desire and capacity for dialectical thinking that is manifest so prominently in the arts. Although great bourgeois art still maintained, by the nature of art itself, a “progressive function”<sup>1228</sup> that held out the potential for inspiring radical social change, it “entered increasingly into the service of the suppression of the discontented masses.”<sup>1229</sup> Nevertheless, with the perpetuation of art *at all* within advanced capitalism, the ideal against which one may fruitfully compare the current milieu remained a live possibility and, as such, Marcuse argued, perpetuates the drive towards radical social change and the integration of the ideal world of art into the everyday world of toil and labor. As he said, “the real gratification of individuals can only be realized *against* idealist culture, and only *against* this culture is it propagated as a general demand: the demand for the real transformation of the material conditions of existence, for a new life, for a new form of labor and enjoyment.”<sup>1230</sup> Although art, for Marcuse, lost a little of its direct application to radical social practice, it remained the inspiration for those who do *not* take the romantic path of quietism and seclusion but, instead, the objective-realistic path towards transforming society such that alienation is dissolved through the creation of a milieu which no longer creates antagonisms between labor and pleasure, toil and art, individual and society.

As Kellner notes, “during the long periods in which Marcuse toiled in government bureaucracies, there was little evidence of what would later emerge as his aesthetic theory and vision for the potential role of the aesthetic dimension in the process of social

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<sup>1227</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>1228</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1229</sup> Marcuse, “The Affirmative Character of Culture,” *Op. Cit.*, 189.

<sup>1230</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

transformation.”<sup>1231</sup> However, thanks to the work of Kellner and others, a 1945 article entitled “Some Remarks on Aragon: Art and Politics in the Totalitarian Era,” never published in Marcuse’s lifetime and discovered in his archives, demonstrated an enduring interest in art’s role in social transformation. This study of Louis Aragon and French resistance literature articulated Marcuse’s views at the time of the role of authentic art in radical social transformation and confirmed Marcuse’s appreciation for surrealism<sup>1232</sup> which always held a great fascination for him.

In keeping with his analysis of art’s role in “Affirmative Culture,” here, as Kellner notes, “art and love are among the most radical oppositional forces sine they produce an alternative reality completely at odds with an oppressive reality; this difference can help reveal the horror of the totalitarian life and the need to make a break with it.”<sup>1233</sup> As Marcuse said:

[Art] must be shaped in such a manner that it reveals the negative system in its totality and, at the same time, the absolute necessity of liberation. The work of must, at its breaking point, expose the ultimate nakedness of man’s (and nature’s) existece, stripped of all the paraphernalia of monopolistic mass culture, completely and utterly alone, in the abyss of destruction, despair and freedom. The most revolutionary work of art will be, at the same time, the most esoteric, the most anti-collectivist one, for the goal of the revolution is the free individual.<sup>1234</sup>

Truly revolutionary art must be in such sharp contrast to the profoundly unfree milieu of capitalism that it is beyond capitalism’s ability to desubliminate, co-opt, and integrate it into their reifying mores. It must portray “the horrors of existing reality” and project

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<sup>1231</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 28.

<sup>1232</sup> “In Marcuse’s view, certain forms of surrealist art...are dedicated to the destruction of the world in its totality and in a totalitarian world the negation of the whole repressive system is the goal of truly radical art,” *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>1233</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1234</sup> Herbert Marcuse, “Some Remarks on Aragon: Art in Politics in the Totalitarian Era,” in *The Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, vol. 1, *Technology, War and Fascism*, ed. Douglas Kellner (New York: Routledge, 1998), 203.

“images of a better life”<sup>1235</sup> so utterly and completely that it can in no way be reduced to the terms of the system that it critiques.

Critiquing forms of avant-garde art and extreme formalism, Marcuse noted the failed attempts of these schools of artistic expression to become truly radical forms of art, both being easily “absorbed as aesthetic fashion.”<sup>1236</sup> The challenge becomes, as Kellner notes, “for emancipatory art...to combine the aesthetic and the political, to produce aesthetic forms that also engage sociopolitical reality and can have progressive political effects.”<sup>1237</sup> Here, Marcuse hinted at his analysis of the objective-realist strains in the German artist novels where art has a direct and immediate transformative power rather than remaining on the marginalia of culture and operating as a hereustic or inspirational device for an entirely separate realm of political action. This is what Marcuse meant by “authentic art,” art that acts as “a negation of existing oppressive reality” by “the postulating of another world” and preserving “visions of emancipation” in keeping with the “radical project”<sup>1238</sup> of critical theory. Art, in this sense, cannot help but have a political dimension, whether or not that was the artist’s intention and whether or not that political dimension is explicitly manifest in the work of art itself. Further, art takes on a more direct and immediate role, continuing his general critique of romanticism as he notes here that romanticism, as we’ve explored, amounts to little more than “cheap escapism.”<sup>1239</sup> Truly progressive art, which he saw manifest in the poetry of Aragon, Paul Éluard, and others in the idiom of French resistance writers, speaks “the language of estrangement,” depicting “the sacrificed utopia which is to emerge as the historical

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<sup>1235</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 29.

<sup>1236</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1237</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1238</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1239</sup> Marcuse, “Some Remarks on Aragon: Art in Politics in the Totalitarian Era,” *Op. Cit.*, 207.

reality”<sup>1240</sup> once more. “As the language of estrangement, the paraphernalia of love and sensuality,” repressed as a necessary condition of commodity capitalism as he notes throughout *Eros and Civilization*, “thus are part of the political form of these poems.”<sup>1241</sup> In so doing, these forms of authentic, radical art refuse “an oppressive social reality” by promoting “estrangement from this world,” become incapable of co-option, and create the “images of a better world” which instigate the desire for radical change.

The first explicit expression of an “aesthetic dimension” came in *Eros and Civilization* where Marcuse concretized many of the disparate trains of thought running throughout his earlier ruminations on art and art’s place in revolutionary change. Already we’ve seen hints at its formulation in Marcuse’s depiction of the “realm” or “dimension” of art as something, to varying degrees, separate from the political dimension and, ultimately, uni-dimensional aspects of modern society. It is a dimension, sometimes depicted as arising out *of*, and sometimes depicted as a complete break *from*, the bourgeois-qua-capitalist political state, taking on the form of a productive comparison that not only reveals the indoctrinating tendencies of the current milieu but, too, provides fruitful comparison with it through an articulation of an entirely other realm of possibility, conjuring images of a radically other societal structure of freedom and the integration of art and labor negating all forms of alienation and repression. As Kellner summarizes:

*Eros and Civilization* carried through a revolution in aesthetic theory, combining psychoanalysis with radical philosophy and social theory in elaborating perspectives on how the aesthetic dimension could help promote individual liberation and the creation of nonrepressive society and culture. Taking aesthetic theory out of the realm of pure philosophy,

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<sup>1240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1241</sup> *Ibid.*

Marcuse moved aesthetics into the center of critical social theory and revolutionary theory and practice.<sup>1242</sup>

As we've explored, Marcuse's central focus on this seminal text was to demonstrate the demand for surplus repression within the performance principle of the modern age. Art, imagination, fantasy, and memory,<sup>1243</sup> offered the most idealistic potential for the onset of radical social change. An individual was capable of recollecting a youth free from repression,<sup>1244</sup> a more libidinous and pleasurable existence prior to the repressive and stultifying milieu of the present age. Further, an individual, according to Marcuse, could postulate an earlier historical epoch<sup>1245</sup> prior to the industrialization and mechanization that lead to the commodity fetishism and stultification of the modern age. Both, in a Peircean sense, create the tension requisite for doubt about the necessity and efficacy of technical rationality and the general composition of the modern age and, for Marcuse, stimulates negative thinking by demonstrating alternatives to *what is* and creating the tension requisite for the postulation and, ideally, movement towards, radical alternatives of a community without alienation, where labor and pleasure are fused, where technology no longer indoctrinates, and where authenticity can reemerge as a viable human reality.

Fantasy operated as a sort of alienation from alienation, a necessarily distinct and divergent reality from the alienating tendencies of the status quo. Fantasy, as he said, is

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<sup>1242</sup> Kellner, "Marcuse, Art, and Liberation," *Op. Cit.*, 31.

<sup>1243</sup> "Marcuse subtly reformulated the therapeutic role of memory stress in psychoanalysis. Drawing on the distinction between *Gedachtnis* (a standard term for 'memory') and *Erinnerung* (or remembrance) Marcuse interprets *Erinnerung* as bringing together repressed elements of the past, utopian longings, and struggles for a better world...although Marcuse preserves the psychoanalytic linkage between forgetting and repression, he stresses the liberating potentialities of remembrance and the recollection of pleasurable or euphoric experiences, as well as the traumatic experiences stressed by Freud," *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>1244</sup> "Marcuse suggests that remembrance of past experiences of freedom and happiness could put into question the painful performances of alienated labor and manifold oppressions of everyday life," *Ibid.*

<sup>1245</sup> "These re-collections are embedded in individual experiences of a happier past and historical conditions that offered more and better freedom, gratification, and happiness," *Ibid.*

“kept free from reality-testing and remained subordinated to the pleasure principle alone,”<sup>1246</sup> in opposition to the performance principle, operating against its indoctrinating and repressive tendencies at every turn. For, as we recall, the pleasure principle may be repressed in the modern milieu, but never wholly eradicated. Art and fantasy, imagination and memory, are the instigators and agitators that rouse the pleasure principle from its slumber and raise an awareness in the individual of just how repressed those drives have become in the performance principle. As Marcuse said, “this is the act of phantasy-making (*das Phantasieren*), which begins already with the games of children, and later, continued as daydreaming, abandons its dependence on real objects.”<sup>1247</sup> As Kellner notes:

Marcuse suggests that phantasy – in daydreaming, dreams at night, play, and its embodiments in art – can project images of integral gratification, pleasure, and reconciliation, often denied in everyday life. Hence, along with memory, Marcuse argues that phantasy can imagine another world and generate images of a better life by speaking the language of the pleasure principle and its demands for gratification.<sup>1248</sup>

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<sup>1246</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 140.

<sup>1247</sup> *Ibid.*, 140. Although the imagination’s ability to abandon “its dependence on real objects” is useful to negative thinking, the free-play of ideas being unleashed to conjure possibilities wholly distinct from the indoctrinating milieu of the performance principle, it would be dangerous to linger in such a realm, independent of real objects, indefinitely. Such a mentality might lead to quietism or the kind of romanticism that Marcuse chastised in his critique of the German artist-novel, a flight *from* reality abandoning any drive to make tangible social change in the world of “real objects.” In this way, Marcuse tied imagination into art: although the imagination is independent of “real objects,” the content of the imagination can be made manifest in and through artistic works which are, themselves, “real objects,” in a sense, imagination made manifest. As he said: “Phantasy play a most decisive function in the total metnal structure: it links the deepest layers of the unconscious with the highest products of consciousness (art), the dream with the reality; it preserves the archetypes of the genus, the perpetual but repressed ideas of the collective and individual memory, the tabooed images of freedom,” *Ibid.*, 140 – 141. If imagination has a “truth value all its own, which corresponds to an experience of its own – namely, the surmounting of the antagonistic human reality” and if “imagination envisions the reconciliation of the individual with the whole, of desire with realization, of happiness with reason” (*Ibid.*, 143), then art, as imagination made manifest, is the presentation of those values wholly independent of the values heteronymously and instrumentally imposed in the modern milieu. And “while this harmony has removed into utopia by the established reality principle, phantasy insists that it must and can become real, that behind the illusion lies *knowledge*. The truths of imagination are first realized when phantasy itself takes form, when it creates a universe of perception and comprehension – a subjective and at the same time objective universe. This occurs in *art*,” *Ibid.*, 143 – 144.

<sup>1248</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 33.



Art's relationship to fantasy and memory is that it "encodes memory and phantasy mediated by the faculty of imagination,"<sup>1249</sup> operating as a dynamic form of negative thinking, "the negation of unfreedom."<sup>1250</sup> The key passage linking art and phantasy can be found in *Eros and Civilization* where Marcuse noted: "phantasy plays a most decisive function in the total mental structure: it links the deepest layers of the unconscious with the highest products of consciousness (art), the dream with the reality; it preserves the archetypes of the genus, the perpetual but repressed ideas of the collective and individual memory, the tabooed images of freedom."<sup>1251</sup> Art is the *product* of phantasy: imagination made manifest. Though phantasy is a subjective, cognitive experience, it can be translated into sound and image in the objective world for others to experience as a site of inspiration and critical engagement.

The relationship between "phantasy" and "imagination," however, is far less clear in Marcuse's work. Top scholars frequently equivocate between the two in their analyses of Marcuse's aesthetics.<sup>1252</sup> Further, Marcuse was not always consistent in referring to "imagination" as a "faculty," nor precisely what he meant by "faculty" in the first place. Indeed, even "phantasy" was sometimes referred to as a "faculty" without any explanation as to what, precisely, that term meant for him in this context. In *Negations*, for example, Marcuse noted: "the essential connection of phantasy with philosophy is evident from the function attributed to it by philosophers, especially Aristotle and Kant,

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<sup>1249</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1250</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 144.

<sup>1251</sup> *Ibid.*, 140 – 141.

<sup>1252</sup> Charles Reitz, for example, views them as synonymous, so much so that if you seek "phantasy" in the index of *Art, Alienation, and the Humanities: A Critical Engagement with Herbert Marcuse*, you will find the entirely unhelpful line "see imagination."

under the title ‘imagination.’”<sup>1253</sup> Here the two terms appear synonymous though, as we’ve seen already, Marcuse also insists that imagination is a “mediating faculty” which is *not* synonymous with phantasy.

Marcuse’s invocation of the term “mediating faculty” leads one to believe that he viewed “imagination” through a Kantian lens, noting imagination’s “unique capacity to ‘intuit’ an object though the latter be not present and to create something new out of given material of cognition, imagination denotes a considerable degree of independence from the given, of freedom amid a world of unfreedom.”<sup>1254</sup> But Marcuse’s conception of imagination was not a *pure* Kantian reading, as he noted in his lectures at the Van Leer Jerusalem Foundation in 1971, he traced the development of “imagination” through Kant’s first critique, his second critique, his third critique (Marcuse’s favorite work by Kant), then on through Hegel, Schiller, and finally, Marx,<sup>1255</sup> appropriating aspects of each into his own conception of the term. Add to that the fact that the term “phantasy” (which he took from Freud) dovetails into, and out of, his analysis of “imagination,” and the result, I argue, is a fusion of the development of the German theorists conception of “imagination” with a Freudian conception of “phantasy,” something Marcuse used to his advantage in discussing the creative potential of the imagination in a milieu which seemed closed off to the possibility of anything radically *new* or distinct from the world of commodity fetishism.

Part of Marcuse’s project was to rescue the faculties of “sensibility” and “imagination” from their pre-Kantian manifestations as faculties viewed as ideally

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<sup>1253</sup> Marcuse, *Negations, Op. Cit.*, 154.

<sup>1254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1255</sup> See “The Jerusalem Lectures” in *The Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, vol. 4, *Art and Liberation*, edited by Douglas Kellner (Routledge: New York, 2007), 153 – 155.

subservient to “reason” or “understanding,” the traditional Platonic-qua-Aristotelian line picked up again by medieval philosophers like St. Augustine, for example, who insisted that the “well-ordered” soul was one in which the senses (the gateway to cupidity) are subjugated by reason (that seeks non-corporal values and ends like God, Truth, and wisdom).<sup>1256</sup>

Rae articulates the synthesizing aspect of imagination succinctly, noting that it creates “the synthetic unity of the senses gleaned from reality with the rational possibility inherent in the intellect. The realm of aesthetics overcomes the binary opposition between sensation and intellect, actuality and possibility, by establishing a synthetic harmonious and organic unity between the opposing terms.”<sup>1257</sup> Further, “by combining the actuality of the sense with the rationality of the intellect, Marcuse argues that aesthetics can overcome the manipulation and indoctrination constitutive of the logic of modernity. The synthetic combination of the senses and the intellect has, therefore, the potential to lead to a new reality, one that is free from the repression of the logic of modernity.”<sup>1258</sup> Thus, for Marcuse, “the imagination is the mediating aspect between the sensuousness object and the pure subjectivity of the individual...the imagination allows the individual to experiment with the world, realize his subjectivity and play with the objects of his

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<sup>1256</sup> “Now, in the philosophical tradition and practically from its beginning, the human senses, sensibility, together with that other strange faculty of the human mind, the imagination, were condemned to a rather inferior role, subordinated to reading and understanding. The truth of the senses and of the imagination – if any truth at all was granted to them – was a highly dependent one, if not altogether negative. Now, this conception of the hierarchical structure of the human mind that begins with Plato, and goes throughout the history of philosophy, seems to take a decisive turn beginning with German idealism in the philosophy of Kant, Schiller, and Hegel. And the whole conception explodes in the theory of Marx, especially the young Marx, who...made the demand for ‘emancipation of the senses’ into a revolutionary concept,” Herbert Marcuse, “The Jerusalem Lectures,” *Op. Cit.*, 152 – 153.

<sup>1257</sup> Gavin Rae, “Marcuse, Aesthetics, and the Logic of Modernity,” *Epoché* 14, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 388 – 402, 388 - 389

<sup>1258</sup> *Ibid.*, 389.

world...without the constraint of a pre-defined end,”<sup>1259</sup> i.e., instrumentalism as Horkheimer defined it.<sup>1260</sup>

It remains unclear, however, if “imagination,” thus conceived, is identical with “phantasy,” as Marcuse presented the term. Frequently he equated the two, noting phantasy’s “constitutive role” in creativity and art, phantasy defined as “artistic imagination.”<sup>1261</sup> Marcuse did us no favors, either, by often calling “phantasy” a “faculty,” like imagination (or, perhaps, he was referring to the same faculty under two names), as he did here, for example: “phantasy does not relate to the other cognitive faculties as illusion to truth...without phantasy, all philosophical knowledge remains in the grip of the present or the past and severed from the future.”<sup>1262</sup> Reitz even refers to them in the plural, that is, the “human faculties of ‘imagination’ and ‘phantasy.’”<sup>1263</sup>

Leaving aside the unlikely possibility that Marcuse was referring to two, distinct faculties, let us look, briefly, at how he defined “phantasy” along Freudian lines in *Eros and Civilization* and note the similarities between this definition and his articulation of “imagination” I discussed above:

Freud singles out phantasy as one mental activity that retains a high degree of freedom from the reality principle even in the sphere of the developed consciousness...phantasy plays a most decisive function in the total mental structure: it links the deepest layers of the unconscious with the highest products of consciousness (art), the dream with the reality...the recognition of phantasy (imagination) as a thought process with its own laws and truth values was not new to psychology and philosophy.<sup>1264</sup>

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<sup>1259</sup> *Ibid.*, 390.

<sup>1260</sup> The following chapter will deal with Horkheimer’s critique of pragmatism as instrumentalism.

<sup>1261</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 50.

<sup>1262</sup> Marcuse, *Negations*, *Op. Cit.*, 155. Further, this would seem to be a subtle critique of “positivism” as Marcuse defined it.

<sup>1263</sup> Reitz, *Art, Alienation, and the Humanities: A Critical Engagement with Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 83. My emphasis.

<sup>1264</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 140 – 141.

Just as imagination is capable of synthesizing data gleaned through sensibility to construct images not bound to the immediate, positivistic present experience, phantasy is free “from the reality principle even in the sphere of the developed consciousness.” The products of phantasy, “art,” are a synthesis of dream and reality, consciousness and unconsciousness, operating in a realm with truth values all its own. Indeed, so similar are the two terms (“imagination” stemming from a Kantian emphasis with what appears to be a dash of Schiller’s “free play” concept and “phantasy” from a Freudian perspective)<sup>1265</sup> that Marcuse explicitly equates them here in putting “imagination” in parentheses after “phantasy.” In sum, as Schoolman notes, “art is the ‘form’ of imagination. The imagination or the realm of fantasy is the unconscious expression of the imagination’s psychological contents. Art is the sublimated expression of fantasy, and, at the same time, it mediates between the unconscious and the social universe.”<sup>1266</sup> Art is the product of imagination made manifest, tangible or audible, existing out in the social universe. Thus, “art gives rise to the ability to reconcile imagination and reality.”<sup>1267</sup> For Marcuse, our “sensibility” is intimately bound up with our “imagination” and both are the fore of determining actual, existing social reality. Sensibility is our immediate gateway to the present, our experience of what *is*, the content of which determines, in no small part, the content of the imagination and, thus, the *form* that content takes, that is, “art.” Marcuse was concerned that technical rationality, the performance principle, the logic of modernity, or whatever one wishes to call it, entering in through sensibility had an

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<sup>1265</sup> “Marcuse’s work with fantasy and imagination effectively expresses his synthesis of the work of Freud and critical theoretical aesthetics,” Zachary Simpson, *Life as Art: Aesthetics and the Creation of Self* (New York: Lexington Books, 2012), 100.

<sup>1266</sup> Morton Schoolman, “Marcuse’s Aesthetics and the Displacement of Critical Theory,” in *New German Critique* 8 (Spring 1976): 54 – 72, 66.

<sup>1267</sup> Simpson, *Life as Art: Aesthetics and the Creation of Self, Op. Cit.*, 100.

adverse effect on the imagination, namely, “where the images of the imagination were identified with the rational design of the social and political world to which it had historically been opposed by virtue of its erotic content.”<sup>1268</sup> Thus:

As art is translated into one-dimensional language, the drives of the repressed instincts are translated into one-dimensional behavior. The normative truths associated with unconscious Eros are forfeited. This decline of art has serious implications for critical theory, for the success with which positivism (as reification) asserts its authority over all language, which now includes the language, that is, form, of art, testifies to the far more significant triumph of one-dimensional behavior over the dimension of Eros, Marcuse’s ‘second dimension.’<sup>1269</sup>

But as much as one-dimensionality can infiltrate the imagination (thereby conditioning “art,” its product), it cannot (Marcuse optimistically opines) infiltrate it so completely as to close off the possibility of genuine creativity and novelty. Marcuse’s hope, then, was that by reinvigorating art and championing the imagination, the products of that creative free play of ideas (art) could come to subsequently condition the social reality in which those products are located. Thus, though one-dimensionality threatens to flow *from* the external social world, *through* sensibility, *into* the imagination thus one-dimensionalizing art, itself, which is then produced, placed *into* that external social world, thereby perpetuating the indoctrinating process of reification and one-dimensionality, Marcuse held hope that an opposite current could likewise be harnessed: *from* the creative free play of the imagination comes art, made manifest in the external social world, taken in *through* sensibility by others and *into* their *own* imaginations, conditioning further novelty and creativity that breaks from the indoctrinating mores of one-

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<sup>1268</sup> Schoolman, “Marcuse’s Aesthetics and the Displacement of Critical Theory,” *Op. Cit.*, 66.

<sup>1269</sup> *Ibid.*, 66 – 67.

dimensionality.<sup>1270</sup> Further, Marcuse held out hope that sensibility *itself* would change, explaining his perennial call for a “new sensibility,” one inspired by art (the products of imagination, the sensuous, the taboo, Eros, and all that is repressed in one-dimensional society) such that we begin to *experience* the world anew, through fresh, liberated eyes. In sum, art (the product of imagination/phantasy) fulfills a very similar function as negative thinking, in general.

This type of art-as-negative-thinking was represented, for Marcuse, most profoundly in the work of the surrealists that, as we’ve seen, had always captured Marcuse’s interest. He noted, for example:

The surrealists recognized the revolutionary implications of Freud’s discoveries...but when they asked, ‘Cannot the dream also be applied to the solution of the fundamental problems of life?’ they went beyond psychoanalysis in demanding that the dream be made into reality without compromising its content. Art allied itself with the revolution.

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<sup>1270</sup> By this reading, it would appear to follow that both creating works of art and, simply, enjoying them, would provide a stimulus to negative thinking: either one’s own imagination is engaged in the creation of art or else one’s imagination is being stimulated *by* the sensible experience of someone else’s art. The latter, however, is more tenuous; as it presumes that one’s sensibility has not been so warped by one-dimensional thinking that his or her imagination *can* be so stimulated. Rae notices this tension, as well, saying, “at times Marcuse conflates the distinction between individual liberation arising from the creation of the aesthetic, which he privileges, *and* individual liberation arising from the enjoyment of the aesthetic. By privileging the liberating role of *aesthetic creation* Marcuse argues that the emancipatory value of a genuine aesthetic lies in its capacity to liberate the individual from constraining socio-economic forces by facilitating an alteration in the individual’s subjective consciousness. Not only does this risk fetishising the role of production in a way that threatens to mirror the fetishisation of production of the logic of modernity, but it may also result in each individual simply finding liberation in his own world of subject aesthetic production. The danger of privileging aesthetic creation is that the emancipation that accompies it only describes a subjective liberation; it does not describe the way that this subjective transformation can and will transcend the limitations of the individual artist to transform the entire logic of society,” Rae, “Marcuse, Aesthetics, and the Logic of Modernity,” *Op. Cit.*, 396. This would be the type of passivity and quietism Marcuse railed against in his dissertation, where “reliance on aesthetic creation to overcome the logic of modernity risks each individual simply retreating into a world of subjective escapism,” *Ibid.* Thus, it would seem Marcuse can’t hold the position that aesthetic *creation* ought to be privileged above aesthetic *enjoyment*, for even *if* aesthetic creation inspired another individual (through that second individual’s aesthetic enjoyment) to *create* art him/herself who then creating some work of art that inspired a *third* individual (through that third individual’s aesthetic enjoyment) to create art, *ad infinitum*, if the emphasis remains only on aesthetic creation, and not aesthetic enjoyment, then aesthetic enjoyment is reduced to the means of the end of inspiring one to create for him or herself and art becomes some manner of benevolent contagion; a virus, of sorts, spreading throughout a society of relatively solipsistic and isolated individuals who are encouraged to kick the proverbial latter (someone else’s art) away once they’ve been sufficiently inspired to create art themselves.

Uncompromising adherence to the strict truth value of imagination comprehends reality more fully.<sup>1271</sup>

Here, in keeping with his adherence to the objective-realist novels of his earliest work, Marcuse insisted that the most authentic forms of art have as their goal, whether explicitly or implicitly, social transformation. As Kellner notes, “art in its highest potentialities is a protest against the existing order, a refusal to conform to its repression and domination, a projection of alternatives and, in the case of the surrealists and aesthetic modernist groups, a demand that they be realized.”<sup>1272</sup> Though the emphasis here is on visual arts, Marcuse multi-fold analysis of art as negative thinking ranged the gamut from painting, sculpture, performance arts, to music.<sup>1273</sup>

Although Soviet Marxism and American democracy are ideologically divergent, as we saw in *One-Dimensional Man*, they maintain similar problems in terms of individual autonomy by their technological structure. This similarity is apparent in the role of art as both (as we’ve seen before) capable of emancipation as well as further indoctrination. In *Soviet Marxism*, for example, Marcuse noted that realism “can be – and has been – a highly critical and progressive form of art; confronting reality ‘as it is’ with its ideological and idealized representations, realism upholds the truth against

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<sup>1271</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Op. Cit.*, 149.

<sup>1272</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 34 – 35.

<sup>1273</sup> In “Art as Form of Reality,” for example, Marcuse discussed the plays of Brecht (Marcuse, “Art as a form of Reality,” *Op. Cit.*, 140), the novels of Kafka and Joyce (*Ibid.*, 146), and the music of Beethoven and Mahler (*Ibid.*, 148). One of the hallmarks of great art, for Marcuse, was its ability to “break through the universe of mental and physical pollution in which we live” (*Ibid.*, 140) which is not restricted to simply the visual arts. “Music does it,” as he said, “with song and dance: the music which activates the body; the songs which no longer sing but cry and shout,” *Ibid.* Although Marcuse tended to privilege the visual arts for their more immediate emblematic example of imagination’s “images” made manifest, he was quite clear that *any* medium, so long as it was capable of revealing the truths of the imagination and breaking through this universe of mental pollution, could be considered quality art.



concealment of falsification.”<sup>1274</sup> However, realism as it manifests in the Soviet Union, “conforms to the pattern of a repressive state.”<sup>1275</sup> In “idealizing the existing society,”<sup>1276</sup> it adds to the reification of the mores of that society without the ability to militate against it.

The same phenomenon manifests in America, wherein “culture and art have progressively lost their radical potential and are becoming more conservative as they are integrated into the structure of the existing society,”<sup>1277</sup> what we discussed previously as a form of artificial desublimation. “Mass culture absorbs and transforms high culture, robbing it of its subversive potential, so that art is at most an adornment, or mild diversion.”<sup>1278</sup> As Bronner notes:

When Marcuse applies these concepts to the condition of an artwork in advanced industrial society, a cyclical process is seen as going into effect. Where repression is brought to bear upon the individual through institutionalized controls, he will attempt to vent his libidinal energy through a sublimated practice that will result in a work of art. But, the very society which the artwork attempts to oppose will transform that *oeuvre* and ‘absorb’ the erotic, libidinous content which provides the aesthetic object with its emancipatory ‘truth.’ As a consequence, repression will literally increase through society’s subversion of sublimated activity.<sup>1279</sup>

This “one-dimensionalizing” of culture and everyday life negates the otherness of art and, with it, negates its emancipatory and radical potential. As he noted, the best iterations of bourgeois art “express a conscious, methodical alienation from the entire sphere of business and industry, and from its calculable and profitable order.”<sup>1280</sup>

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<sup>1274</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 113 – 114.

<sup>1275</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>1276</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 37.

<sup>1277</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1278</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1279</sup> Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, *Op. Cit.*, 111.

<sup>1280</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 58.

As Bronner notes, “institutionally, this becomes manifest in the culture industry which can turn any work into a fad or a ‘spectacle,’”<sup>1281</sup> of which theorists like Guy Debord and Shierry Weber made extensive analyses. Indeed, as Weber notes:

The perversion of the aesthetic: whereas the aesthetic is a totality formed by sublimation of the instincts, the spectacle releases instinctual energies but does not bind them into forms. On the other hand, the spectacle as aesthetic and as consumption prevents the individual from experiencing action and process; he is an actor only as an object and a subject only as a spectator; he consumes rather than makes.<sup>1282</sup>

Despite art’s emancipatory potential to envision, through phantasy and imagination, alternative structures to the prescribed norms, these endeavors are co-opted by the administration, packaged and sold as yet one more avenue of revenue. As Bronner notes:

A similar result can take place through commercial simplification of a work to the point where its critical and emancipatory qualities are liquidated. Thus, classics will be reduced to Monarch notes and *Don Quixote* will become *Man of La Mancha*. In such instances, the existing ‘reality principle’ will be strengthened by the libido which it has absorbed or diffused. This is what Marcuse terms ‘repressive desublimation,’ or the channeling of sublimated activity into socially acceptable – and ultimately repressive – forms.<sup>1283</sup>

Precisely because artificial desublimation is utilized by the Establishment to stave off radical social change through reducing anything wholly alien to their own system of indoctrinating discourse to that prescribed universe of discourse, it follows that if art, phantasy and imagination are tools of negative thinking, clearly the Establishment would have art first and foremost in the crosshairs of desublimation. As Marcuse said:

[Art becomes] part of the technical equipment of the household and of the daily work world. In this process, [artistic works] undergo a decisive

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<sup>1281</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1282</sup> Shierry M. Weber, “Individuation as Praxis,” in *Critical Interruptions: New Left Perspectives on Herbert Marcuse*, ed. Paul Breines (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 37.

<sup>1283</sup> Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists, Op. Cit.*, 111.

transformation; they are losing the qualitative difference, namely the essential dissociation from the established reality principle which was the ground of their liberating function. Now the images and ideas, by virtue of which art, literature, and philosophy once indicted and transcended the given reality are integrated into the society, and the power of the reality principle is greatly extend.<sup>1284</sup>

“Television provides excerpts from Beethoven and Stravinsky while a voice tries to sell a product.”<sup>1285</sup> The cultured individual, who *must*, obviously, love Beethoven, must also, obviously, love high end products and must, of course, drive a Lexus. Conversely, traditionally counter-culture musicians in the idiom of The Sex Pistols or Rage Against the Machine are used to sell counter-culture products, offering the illusion that freedom of self-expression is possible within the advanced industrial society by appearing to champion “counter”-cultural goods and services where, in truth, the goods and services are sold to reify the commodity fetishism of indoctrination to the very “Machine” the youth think they are “raging” against. As Ellul notes, “artistic expression” becomes “subordinated to a censorship of money or the state.”<sup>1286</sup>

Previously “disruptive characters...the artist, the prostitute, the adulteress, the great criminal and outcast, the rebel-poet, the devil, the fool, and other subversive characters”<sup>1287</sup> no longer “represent another form of life”<sup>1288</sup> but have become “freaks or types of the same life, serving as an affirmation rather than negation of the established order.”<sup>1289</sup> As we explored briefly above, the reliance upon “outlier” characters, those that fail to assimilate into the status quo, lose their radical efficacy precisely because they

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<sup>1284</sup> Herbert Marcuse, “The Obsolescence of the Freudian Concept of Man,” in *Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics and Utopia* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 58.

<sup>1285</sup> Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, *Op. Cit.*, 114.

<sup>1286</sup> Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 129.

<sup>1287</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 58 – 59.

<sup>1288</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 38.

<sup>1289</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 59.

obfuscate the underlying truth that these figures are *only* “outliers” at all based upon the universe of discourse of the system itself and, in this way, in fact contribute to the system’s reification more than they do its dissolution. The self-identification of a reader, for example, with one of these figures results not in the desire for radical social change (as with the objective-realist) but with the quietism and recession *from* the culture more in line with the problematic forms of romanticism Marcuse critiqued.

In the period of *One-Dimensional Man*, even some representations of the “avant-garde and the beatniks” “suffer the fate of being absorbed by what they refute,” sharing the “function of entertaining without endangering the good conscience of men of good will.”<sup>1290</sup> Thus, only the most extreme forms of art are capable of avoiding this form of co-option, only “truly avant-garde work of literature communicates the break with communication,”<sup>1291</sup> such as “Rimbaud, dada, surrealism, and other avant-gardists” that “reject the structure of everyday discourse, presenting compelling words, images, harmonies, and works in a context of refusal and negation.”<sup>1292</sup> Thus, following from his pessimistic critique of desublimation and ease wherein the Establishment is able to co-opt what may have previously been profoundly revolutionary forms of art, Marcuse demanded a more direct and intimate connection between art and political practice: the art, itself, must have a component of negation of the status quo and participate in Whitehead’s “Great Refusal.”

At the bohemian margins of society...avant-garde movements arose in the beginnings of the twentieth century which sought to oppose this development [of radical desublimation]. A ‘negative’ culture of all-encompassing protest sharpened the critical faculty, emphasized the subject, and reasserted the utopian dream. In this sense, Andre Breton

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<sup>1290</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>1291</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>1292</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 39.

could call for the ‘Great Refusal’ which, in Marcuse’s terms, demands an attempt to increase the distance between social reality and the aesthetic sphere from the standpoint of revolt. Thus, Marcuse’s support of experimental, modernist works which consciously attempt to estrange themselves from the given order.<sup>1293</sup>

Authentic art, then, must either *directly* confront and critique the established norms so powerfully that they resist any effort of co-option *by* the Establishment, or else operate in a universe of discourse so extreme and alien to the Establishment that it could never be reduced to the Establishment’s language. As he said:

If the established society manages all normal communication, validating or invalidating it in accordance with social requirements, then the values alien to these requirements may perhaps have no other medium of communication than the abnormal one of fiction. The aesthetic dimension still retains a freedom of expression which enables the writers and artists to call men and things by their name – to name the otherwise unnameable.<sup>1294</sup>

To the former, Marcuse was keen on the types of art that are, themselves, political in such an extreme fashion that they cannot be co-opted by the Establishment, citing Bob Dylan as an example. In a 1967 essay, “Art in the One-Dimensional Society,”<sup>1295</sup> Marcuse said, “when I saw and participated in their demonstration against the war in Vietnam, when I heard them singing the songs of Bob Dylan, I somehow felt, and it is very hard to define, that this is really the only revolutionary language left today.”<sup>1296</sup>

With this renewed insistence on a revolutionary component to art itself, Marcuse distanced himself from the position that art ought to operate in a distinct social sphere as

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<sup>1293</sup> Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists, Op. Cit.*, 113.

<sup>1294</sup> Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man, Op. Cit.*, 247.

<sup>1295</sup> Originally presented as a lecture at the New York School of Visual Arts, March 8, 1967.

<sup>1296</sup> Herbert Marcuse, “Art in the One-Dimensional Society,” in *The Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, vol. 4, *Art and Liberation*, ed. Douglas Kellner (New York: Routledge, 2007), 113.

a heuristic and inspirational device only. Here, Marcuse insisted on a far more direct and radical manifestation of art *as* an instrument of direct political action. As Kellner notes:

In the light of the ways that a one-dimensional cultural and political establishment absorb art and political protest, a revolutionary art and movement must seek genuine emancipatory alternatives and see how art can produce a different reality. In this context, art would no longer be a separate sphere cut off from social life, but would become a productive force helping to produce a new society.<sup>1297</sup>

In this direct and productive mode, just as technology has become productive of new forms of social control and indoctrination, “art could shape social reality” and “thus lose its illusory status as a realm independent of reality.”<sup>1298</sup>

As we noted above in our discussion of Marcuse’s “aesthetic reduction,” the creation of this new social order relies upon not the dissolution of technology but its co-option *by* this new, radical, aesthetic sensibility. As he said:

The image of art as technique in building or guiding the building of the society calls for the interplay of science, technique and imagination to construct and sustain a new system of life. Technique as art, as construction of the beautiful, not a beautiful objects or places but as the Form of a totality of life – society and nature.<sup>1299</sup>

Freed from the antagonisms of technological societies, harkening back to the desires he articulated in the protagonists of the German art novel, a community without alienation would be forged as art *guides* technology and imagination *creates* entirely new forms of social arrangements.

This radical approach to art’s direct application to political action would continue throughout the 60’s and early 70’s in texts such as *An Essay on Liberation* and

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<sup>1297</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 43.

<sup>1298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1299</sup> Marcuse, “Art in the One-Dimensional Society,” *Op. Cit.*, 119.

*Counterrevolution and Revolt*. As Kellner rightly notes, a “new tone emerges” in these texts, a tone that “is assertive, aggressive, and highly enthusiastic about the radical potentials of art” as an agent “of liberation and radical social transformation.”<sup>1300</sup> In *An Essay on Liberation*, for example, Marcuse again called for a “new sensibility” born of a rebellion that “envisages a new culture which fulfills the humanistic promises betrayed by the old culture,”<sup>1301</sup> one that maintains a radical transformation of rationality to one that would be “bodily, erotic, *and* political.”<sup>1302</sup> In this Utopian society, Marcuse envisioned an “integration of aesthetics and rationality...the merger of art and technology in the construction of a new social reality, society as a work of art.”<sup>1303</sup> This new sensibility would be antithetical to the destructive tendencies of the one-dimensional society and champion, instead, having fused reason with aesthetics, the erotic, live-bringing impulses heretofore repressed under the performance principle. Freed from the indoctrinating and anesthetizing goods and services of commodity capitalism under the rule of technical rationality, the “false” needs of the one-dimensional society give way to *new* needs, both vital and aesthetic, that would “constitute the instinctual basis for freedom which the long history of class society has blocked.”<sup>1304</sup> As he said:

Freedom would become the environment of an organism which is no longer capable of adapting to the competitive performances required for well-being under domination, no longer capable of tolerating the aggressiveness, brutality, and ugliness of the established way of life. The rebellion would then have taken root in the very nature, the ‘biology’ of the individual; and on these new grounds, the rebels would redefine the objectives and the strategy of the political struggle, in which alone the concrete goals of liberation can be determined.<sup>1305</sup>

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<sup>1300</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 47.

<sup>1301</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 10.

<sup>1302</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 47. My italics.

<sup>1303</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1304</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 4.

<sup>1305</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 – 5.

The adaptive human organism under the aegis of commodity capitalism effectively integrated him or herself into the milieu through acquiescence to the terms of technical rationality, buying the goods and services offered by the Establishment and educating him or herself towards productivity and efficiency. This new sensibility, with its new needs, would integrate the aesthetic dimension into everyday life, dissolving the antagonism between the individual and the natural environment and dissolving the destructive aggressiveness and brutality of competitiveness under capitalism. We see again the desired goal of the “community” beyond antagonism and alienation, where the artistic life *is* life, and society *is* the aesthetic dimension. As Kellner notes, “the aesthetic-erotic needs” now liberated from their repression “would manifest themselves in the drive to create a beautiful and pleasing environment that would eliminate the horrors of capitalist industrialization, terminating in a new society that would eliminate surplus repression.”<sup>1306</sup>

Just as the aesthetic dimension is inherently antithetical to the performance principle, as we’ve seen, the aesthetic needs, too, have an inherent “subversive and political quality.”<sup>1307</sup> As he said, “the aesthetic needs have their own social content: they are the claims of the human organism, mind and body, for a dimension of fulfillment which can be created only in the struggle against the institutions which, by their very functioning, deny and violate these claims.”<sup>1308</sup> The faculty of imagination, so stifled in the one-dimensional milieu, would be liberated in “the collective practice of creating an environment: level by level, step by step – in the material and intellectual production, an

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<sup>1306</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 47.

<sup>1307</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>1308</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation, Op. Cit.*, 27.



environment in which the nonaggressive, erotic, receptive faculties of man, in harmony with the consciousness of freedom strive for the pacification of man and nature.”<sup>1309</sup> This represents the “affirmation of the right to build a society in which the abolition of poverty and toil,” the ideal utilization of technology which went awry in commodity capitalism, “terminates in a universe where the sensuous, the playful, the calm, and the beautiful become forms of existence and thereby the Form of society itself.”<sup>1310</sup> Technology, liberated from its productive capacities under technical rationality, would work *with* the imagination, a tool of a new aestheticized rationality, indeed, the imagination would be “sustained by the achievement of science” and “could turn its productive power to the radical reconstruction of experience...society as a work of art.”<sup>1311</sup>

Marcuse’s Utopia can only be realized through a *cultural* as well as political revolution, and the cultural revolution is based on the emancipation of imagination’s capacity to engage in fantasy, inspired by art, creating art, and transforming a society previously antagonistic to art’s extreme freedoms into an aesthetic society. In *An Essay on Liberation*, one of his militant and optimistic texts, Marcuse championed “rock and protest music, soul music and blues, slang and obscenity, and guerrilla street theater, as well as surrealism, Russian formalism and other movements of the avant-garde,”<sup>1312</sup> anything and everything that had direct and immediate application to a cultural revolution as political practice incapable of being co-opted by the Establishment they seek to undermine. Breaking from his earlier position that bourgeois culture ought to be embraced and merely liberated from its indoctrinating tendencies under commodity

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<sup>1309</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>1310</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>1311</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>1312</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 50.

capitalism, in *An Essay on Liberation* Marcuse “champions all the most radical breaks with bourgeois culture and affirms these aesthetic movements” in a “radical break with the existing society.”<sup>1313</sup> However, in his next book, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (1972), Marcuse returned to that earlier position to some degree, arguing, instead, for a “need to preserve certain aspects of bourgeois culture and aesthetic form precisely for the goals of the revolution”<sup>1314</sup> to come. Although he advocated “a total transformation of the entire traditional culture”<sup>1315</sup> as before, he insisted that the new sensibility cannot be “invented” *ex nihilo* but, rather, “will necessarily depend on the subverting use of traditional material.”<sup>1316</sup> Although, as we explored above, Marcuse continued to champion subversive cultural languages and forms of art that challenge the Establishment (folk traditions, avant-garde, etc.) that speak “the language of the oppressed” or have “a natural affinity to protest and refusal,”<sup>1317</sup> he is no longer an advocate of the “systematic use of obscenity”<sup>1318</sup> that he previously championed in *An Essay on Liberation*. This is no inconsistency on Marcuse’s part, but an observation, borne of his insistence that critical theory is always socially and historically situated in the here and now, that obscene language “no longer defines the radical”<sup>1319</sup> after it had been so thoroughly co-opted by the Establishment as to not only become so ubiquitous as to lose its radical edge, but actually reifying for the commodities that now cater *to* obscenity, sexual debasement, and shock value. Further, Marcuse leveled a scathing critique against forms of art that take themselves to be *so* radical that they become a type of “anti-art” which he viewed as

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<sup>1313</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1314</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1315</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 79.

<sup>1316</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>1317</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1318</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1319</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

antithetical to the purpose of cultural revolution. Since “aesthetic qualities are essentially nonviolent, nondomineering” and enable the individual “to see things in their own right, to experience the joy enclosed in them,”<sup>1320</sup> *anti-art* movements undermine the very purpose they set out to achieve by negating the radical utility of art in political practice.

Within his critique of anti-art movements, Marcuse revealed another subtle shift in his position on the relationship between art and political practice. As we’ve seen, Marcuse oscillated between viewing art as a direct instrument of political practice and social transformation and an indirect method of an aesthetic dimension connected to, but ultimately separate from, everyday life that operates as a heuristic or inspirational role to provoke political action in a strictly political realm. Whereas in *An Essay on Liberation*, Marcuse seemed to champion the former, in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, he moved back to the latter in saying, for example, the “relation between art and revolution is a unity of opposites, an antagonistic unity” and that art is, and ought, to remain “non-operational.”<sup>1321</sup> As Kellner notes, “art serves the revolution in its own dimension and not by being mere propaganda or instrument.”<sup>1322</sup>

The tension between art and revolution is stressed, as is its necessary distance between the aesthetic dimension and revolutionary practice. Marcuse now defends the form of art as the vehicle of the aesthetic liberation and argues that the forms of the great classical and modernist bourgeois art reveal the potential of genuine art to transcend and critique existing reality.<sup>1323</sup>

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<sup>1320</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>1321</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>1322</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 52.

<sup>1323</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

Marcuse saw examples of this form of authentic art in the poems of Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti, as well as a continued appreciation for the songs of Dylan.<sup>1324</sup> Working within the form of art without succumbing to ant-art tendencies, they represent a critique of bourgeois culture while still operating with its mediums, radical yet stopping short of becoming an anti-art that would undermine the revolutionary efforts they set out to achieve in the first place.

Consider, for example, Ginsberg's iconic poem "Howl":

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix, angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night...expelled from the academies for crazy and publishing obscene odes on the windows of the skull...who burned cigarette holes in their arms protesting the narcotic tobacco haze of Capitalism.<sup>1325</sup>

In asking "what sphinx of cement and aluminum bashed open their skulls and ate up their brains and imagination?"<sup>1326</sup> Ginsberg hints at the stultification of Marcuse's realm of "phantasy" requisite for radical artistic expression by the "cement and aluminum" of a technological age. The villain of the piece is "Moloch,"<sup>1327</sup> perhaps doubling for Marcuse's "Establishment," the "heavy judger of men," "the incomprehensible prison," "the crossbone soulless jailhouse and Congress of sorrows." Moloch, "whose mind is pure machinery," "whose blood is running money." Ginsberg highlighted the plight, sorrow and misery of the radically marginalized, the homosexual, those labeled "deviant" and "criminal" within the terms of the Establishment. The very language and imagery of

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<sup>1324</sup> One would be curious to hear what Marcuse would make of Dylan's recent spate of lingerie and car commercials.

<sup>1325</sup> Allen Ginsberg, *Howl*, edited by Barry Miles (New York: Harper Perennial, 1986), 3 – 4.

<sup>1326</sup> *Ibid.* 6.

<sup>1327</sup> *Ibid.*

the poem was antithetical to the vestigial Puritanical notions of the Establishment when it was published, resulting in the notorious court case that followed.

In a fascinating exchange between Kellner and Marcuse in 1978, Kellner reveals that Marcuse didn't change his mind on the revolutionary role of art so much as evolved with the changing times and efficacy of the movements themselves:

He claimed that 1960s folk and protest music, the songs of Bob Dylan, radical theater and other forms of movement art successfully combined aesthetic form with political messages, and by contributing to a large-scale radicalizing process were playing an important part in a political movement. In the 1970s, Marcuse claims, the dissident cultures were losing, for the most part, both their aesthetic and political quality, sacrificing both concern with the formal qualities that he ascribes to authentic art and political content and effects. Hence, in this situation, Marcuse perceived the need to go back and defend the aesthetic values and works of the classical bourgeois heritage which, he believed, contained important emancipatory and political potential that was being neglected by the concern with the cultural fads of the moment.<sup>1328</sup>

Marcuse's position in *Counterrevolution and Revolt* was further reified in his exploration of surrealism throughout the 70's. He was, as we've seen, always deeply intrigued by the surrealist movement, especially the work of Breton, Aragon, Magritte, and Dali.<sup>1329</sup> In surrealism, he saw the effort to freely express "fantasies in painting" which called for "the radical transformation of art and life."<sup>1330</sup> The fantastic and imaginative aspects of surrealism continued to push Marcuse away from the position that art ought to have a direct and instrumental value in political activity and ought, instead, remain a distinct, separate aesthetic dimension from which political action may be inspired indirectly. In a letter to a Chicago surrealist group, Marcuse went so far as to claim there was an "irreconcilable contradiction between art and politics, due to the transcendence of art

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<sup>1328</sup> Kellner, "Marcuse, Art, and Liberation," *Op. Cit.*, 54.

<sup>1329</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>1330</sup> *Ibid.*

beyond all political goals.”<sup>1331</sup> Surrealism, for Marcuse, attempted to “sustain and recapture the transcendent, *sur*-realistic qualities of art, to sustain and recapture the *alienating* force of art as force *in* and *for* the political struggle.”<sup>1332</sup> In this way, art has an operational value in radical political change, but a far less direct and immediate one than Marcuse championed previously. As Kellner notes, “surrealism suggests that we live in another metaphysical, spiritual world,”<sup>1333</sup> one that, in Marcuse’s words, “interferes with the established one without invalidating or abolishing it.”<sup>1334</sup> As Marcuse said:

In this situation, the direct polarization of art, i.e., its proletarianization or popularization, can be attained only at the price of sacrificing the radically nonconformist qualities of art, and sacrificing the commitment to the internal, autonomous (though historical) truth of art which calls for its own, autonomous forms of representation and communication.<sup>1335</sup>

Here, again, Marcuse “stresses...the inevitable contradiction between art and revolution, the fact that art cannot be instrumentalized to serve pragmatic purposes, that art cannot serve the existing reality, that is constitutes another reality, an aesthetic dimension that can promote the interests of liberation.”<sup>1336</sup>

This “aesthetic dimension,” already referenced explicitly in *Eros and Civilization*, is the title and focus of his last book published in 1978. As Marcuse’s thought continued to gravitate away from the notion of art as direct and instrumental in political action, some scholars like Lukes have argued that Marcuse ended his aesthetic investigations with a “flight into inwardness,” a radical aestheticism bordering on the type of romanticism that he’d critiqued throughout his long career. Others, like Kellner, argue

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<sup>1331</sup> Herbert Marcuse, “Letters to the Chicago Surrealists,” in *The Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, vol. 4, *Art and Liberation*, ed. Douglas Kellner (Routledge: New York, 2007), 181.

<sup>1332</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1333</sup> Kellner “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 56.

<sup>1334</sup> Marcuse, “Letters to the Chicago Surrealists,” *Op. Cit.*, 181.

<sup>1335</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>1336</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 57.

against this position, saying instead that Marcuse continued to view art as an integral role for radical social change as he had been doing since the beginning. As I will explore briefly, there is validity in both positions and I will attempt to adjudicate between them.

Precisely because the heart of the text is a critique of traditional Marxist aesthetics (the notion that “revolutionary art should be proletarian art” and “that all bourgeois art is decadent and ideological”<sup>1337</sup>), Marcuse remained consistent with his later position that art ought to be, to some degree, divorced from direct and immediate political practice, arguing that Marxist aesthetics were reductive in that they “reduced art to political instrumentalization.”<sup>1338</sup> Continuing to champion the benevolent aspects of high bourgeois culture and art, Marcuse said:

In contrast to orthodox Marxist aesthetics I see the political potential of art in art itself, in the aesthetic form as such. Furthermore, I argue that by virtue of its aesthetic form, art is largely autonomous vis-à-vis the given social relations. In its autonomy art both protests these relations, and at the same time transcends them. Thereby art subverts the dominant consciousness, the ordinary experience.<sup>1339</sup>

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<sup>1337</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>1338</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1339</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), ix. In “Art as Form of Reality,” Marcuse explored with more specificity the notion of “Art as Form”: “Art (capitalized) as including not only the visual arts but also literature and music” and “Form (capitalized) for that which defines Art as Art, that is to say, as essentially (ontologically) different not only from (everyday) reality but also from such other manifestations of intellectual culture as science and philosophy,” Marcuse, “Art as Form of Reality,” *Op. Cit.*, 141. Marcuse lamented that Art, in its current “Form,” tended to perpetuate “that which is” and prevent the “realization of what which can and ought to be,” *Ibid.* Art *can* blockade this radical change precisely because of the Form it takes, that is, “Art does so precisely inasmuch as it *is* Form, because the artistic Form (no matter how *anti-art* it strives to be) arrests that which is in motion, gives it limit and frame and place in the prevailing universe of experience and aspirations, gives it a value *in* this universe, makes it an object among others. This means that, in this universe, the work of art...becomes *exchange* value, commodity: and it is precisely the *Commodity Form*, as the form of reality, which is the target of today’s rebellion,” *Ibid.* Yet, for Marcuse, the Form of Art is not limited to this Commodity Form *only*, but, more generally, represents the identity of the very *oeuvre* that “makes a *work* into a work of *art* – this entity is the Form. But virtue of the Form, and the Form alone, the content achieves that uniqueness which makes it the content of one particular work of art and of no other. The way in which the story is told; the structure and selectiveness of verse and prose; that which is *not* said, *not* represented and yet present; the interrelations of lines and colours and points – these are some aspects of the Form which removes, dissociates, alienates the *oeuvre* from the given reality and makes it enter into its own reality: the realm of forms,” *Ibid.*, 142. Although different styles and techniques and “forms” exist historically, contingent upon their surrounding society, all variations are of “*one Form* which

Indeed, in sharp contrast to the romanticism he always railed against, Marcuse noted that:

With the affirmation of the inwardness of subjectivity, the individual steps out of the network of exchange relationships and exchange values, withdraws from the reality of bourgeois society, and enters another dimension of existence. Indeed, this escape from reality led to an experience which could (and did) become a powerful force in *invalidating* the actually prevailing bourgeois values, namely by skirting the locus of the individual's realization from the domain of the performance principle and the profit motive to that of the inner resources of the human being: passion, imagination, conscience. Moreover, withdrawal and retreat were not the last position. Subjectivity strove to break out of its inwardness into the material and intellectual culture. And today, in the totalitarian period, it has become a political value as a counterforce against aggressive and exploitative socialization.<sup>1340</sup>

Akin to his views on negative thinking, art does, indeed, have an inward turn to subjectivism at least insofar as the individual recedes out of the stultifying confines of the performance principle, a necessary first step in emancipation. But Marcuse was quick to add, too, that this is not the end of the story, but the beginning: like the objective-realists he discussed in his very first book, the drive is not to remain in seclusion but to bring to bear this new sensibility into everyday life in order to transform culture and society and bring about a society without antagonism and alienation. As Kellner notes, "Marcuse is clearly not advocating withdrawal or inwardness, but is claiming that genuine art provides an experience that helps liberate the individual from thrall to the existing society to cultivate a critical subjectivity capable of motivation to transformative action to

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distinguishes Art from any other product of human activity" which provides "the 'holiday,' the elevation, the breath in the terrible routine of life – to present 'higher,' 'deeper,' perhaps 'truer' and better, satisfying needs not satisfied in daily work and fun, and therefore pleasurable," *Ibid.*

<sup>1340</sup> Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, *Op. Cit.*, 4 – 5.



produce a better world.”<sup>1341</sup> Subjectivity “moves from withdrawal into an inner world of its own to spring forth to action in the external world.”<sup>1342</sup>

Art, operating in its own aesthetic dimension, first draws the individual out of the stultifying milieu of the performance principle (effectively, the individual withdraws into him or herself) to be inspired, therein, to then “spring forth to action” and political practice to help transform the external world. Further, Marxist aesthetics, for Marcuse, did not take seriously enough precisely the sort of social psychology of the working class that Marcuse elucidated throughout his career. As such, the more art moves towards popularization, the more likely it is to reach the proletariat in a form already desublimated, co-opted, and utilized for increased *alienation* rather than *emancipation*.

To the same extent that art seeks to ‘reach the masses,’ the work’s content will be turned against itself by the culture industry even when that work attempts to express a ‘revolutionary’ message. As a ‘radical’ work becomes a popular commodity, the liberal and tolerant image of the status quo becomes ever more secure. Only through the estrangement from the given order will art remain able to preserve itself as the negation of that order.<sup>1343</sup>

However, Marcuse demonstrated pessimism as never before in this final text as to the degree to which this Utopian coordination of art and technology, the aesthetic and the everyday, can ever truly be achieved. Falling away from his thesis in *Eros and Civilization* wherein Marcuse envisioned a harmonious community wherein unrepressed instincts and society were coordinated into an aesthetic-rational whole, in this last book, he suggested, instead:

Art declares its caveat to the thesis according to which the time has come to change the world. While art bears witness to the necessity of liberation,

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<sup>1341</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 63.

<sup>1342</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1343</sup> Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, *Op. Cit.*, 117.

it also testifies to its limits. What has been done cannot be undone; what has passed cannot be recaptured. History is guilt but not redemption. Eros and Thanatos are loves as well as adversaries. Destructive energy may be brought into the service of life to an ever higher degree – Eros itself lives under the sign of finitude, of pain. The ‘eternity of joy’ constitutes itself through the death of individuals. For them, this eternity is an abstract universal...the world was not made for the sake of the human being and it has not become more human.<sup>1344</sup>

Precisely because “Eros is always subject to limitations and the ingression of destructive energies,” a community of “pure and lasting joy” is, ultimately, “impossible.”<sup>1345</sup> Rather than the optimistic underpinnings in *Eros and Civilization* and other earlier texts, the ideal community mentioned as early as *The German Artist Novel* now operates far more as a heuristic device: a hypothetically postulated possibility that will never fully actualized but ought to remain a beacon towards which we ought to strive to achieve. “The aesthetic dimension can offer consolation in the face of the impossibility of attaining lasting happiness, but it cannot realize absolute freedom and happiness.”<sup>1346</sup> Nevertheless, art’s emancipatory potential to bring about this ideal community “ought to remain ideal.”<sup>1347</sup> In a summary of one of his last public appearances, Kellner notes that in a lecture at Irvine in 1979, Marcuse maintained, “art can enter, *as a regulative idea*, the political struggle to change the world.”<sup>1348</sup> Thus, at the end, Marcuse adopted a view of art and its capacity to bring about an ideal community in a manner akin to Peirce’s use of Truth as both as goal to be achieved *by* the ideal community of inquirers and an indication of that community’s mobilization (if Truth has been achieved, that is, it

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<sup>1344</sup> Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, *Op. Cit.*, 68 – 69.

<sup>1345</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 64.

<sup>1346</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1347</sup> Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, *Op. Cit.*, 57.

<sup>1348</sup> Kellner, “Marcuse, Art, and Liberation,” *Op. Cit.*, 69.

follows that a most *ideal* sort of community must have likewise been achieved in order for Truth to be discovered).

In sum, for Marcuse, the entirety of his critique of modern capitalism, whether framed as Freudian-Marxism, a critique of Weberian technical rationality, or his own unique contributions in *One-Dimensional Man* and subsequent texts, the faculty of imagination was stifled into obscurity within these totalitarian societies. But the imagination, in service to the id and the pleasure principle, is not dissolved in its repression, but endures, and seek release through art (as either inspiration or through direct political action), culminating in a dissolution of technical rationality, the performance principle, and all forms of alienation and repression. Technology and aesthetics end their antagonism, as do rationality and art, the everyday life and the aesthetic dimension, and all forms of dichotomies that prevent the realization of authentic, individual freedom. Art ...

... would then be creativity, a creation in the material as well as intellectual sense, a juncture of technique and the arts in the total reconstruction of the environment, a juncture of town and country, industry and nature, after all have been freed from the horrors of commercial exploitation and beautification, so that Art can no longer serve as a stimulus of business. Evidently, the very possibility of creating such an environment depends on the total transformation of the existing society: a new mode and new goals of production, a new type of human being as a producer, the end of role-playing, of the established division of labor, of work and pleasure.<sup>1349</sup>

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<sup>1349</sup> Herbert Marcuse, "Art as a Form of Reality," in *The Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, vol. 4, *Art and Liberation*, ed. Douglas Kellner (New York: Routledge, 2007), 147. This paper was initially presented in a 1969 paper at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in the lecture series on the future of art.

Art draws upon “fantasy” as Marcuse defined it, unleashing “its imaginative structures” to “make liberation a temporary reality and a possible goal.”<sup>1350</sup> By utilizing the imagination, fantasy offers the hypothetical postulation of a radically Other form of reality, providing that “possible goal” while, in practice, the act of *engaging* in artistic endeavors allows at least a “temporary” reprieve from the stultifying effects of technical rationality within the performance principle by engaging in an activity wholly alien to the regimented form of productivity and efficiency in consumer capitalism. “Art has the power to create alternatives to the present”<sup>1351</sup> for great art has, historically, “held up...as a task the image of a better order,”<sup>1352</sup> and, as such, operates as form of negative thinking. As Bronner notes, “art contradicts the existing order with its ‘inner truth’ as it manifests the freedom to shape reality in terms of the imagination. This is the basis for the transcendent character of art.”<sup>1353</sup> The “inner truth,” as we noted in our previous analysis of Marcuse’s Freudian Marxism, is the unfettered libidinal expression of childhood prior to the indoctrinating acculturation into the milieu of technical rationality. As such, art is “one of the most potent forms of imagination” and “is also a form of memory, recalling a beauty that once was and which might once more be.”<sup>1354</sup>

Thus, “Marcuse stressed the *educational* value of the arts because of the qualitative difference he finds between the multidimensional kind of knowledge thought to be produced by the aesthetic imagination and the uni-dimensional kind of knowledge attributed to what he describes as the controlled and repressive rationalities of

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<sup>1350</sup> Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism*, *Op. Cit.*, 131.

<sup>1351</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>1352</sup> Marcuse, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, *Op. Cit.*, 120.

<sup>1353</sup> Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, *Op. Cit.*, 112.

<sup>1354</sup> Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism*, *Op. Cit.*, 137.

achievement, performance, and domination,”<sup>1355</sup> in short, the enculturated values of technical rationality. Just as an aesthetic rationality must supplant the technical rationality of the current age, aesthetic *education* must supplant the indoctrinating call to efficiency and performance within the advanced technological society. The revaluation of values in education and society are mutually complementary, as Marcuse “views aesthetic education as essential for the actualization of a utopian form of society, where art is also to become a material force for the revitalization of all aspects of social life.”<sup>1356</sup>

Fundamentally, no matter the stage of his career, Marcuse wanted to re-imagine art as something beyond the confines of a specific genre, instrumentality or traditional definition of an art “work.” Rather, it was an *artistic life*<sup>1357</sup> and an *artistic world* that Marcuse envisioned wherein “art” became synonymous with the “sensuousness, pleasure, and gratification”<sup>1358</sup> of the pleasure principle released from its sublimated confines of the performance principle. This inner realm, repressed but never wholly negated, maintains values diametrically opposed to the stultifying confines of the technical milieu and, as such, provides the foundation for a revolutionary consciousness. Art, and the education in the arts, cultivates this unique brand of negative thinking by not only turning the student’s attention towards works of art that envision wholly different worlds and possibilities than those proliferated by the Establishment but, too, cultivates the expression and re-emergence of the sensuousness and pleasure buried within the repressed pleasure principle itself. Indeed, as Reitz notes, “the thematic interconnections

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<sup>1355</sup> Reitz, *Art, Liberation, and the Humanities: A Critical Engagement with Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 9 – 10.

<sup>1356</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>1357</sup> “A theory of art must become a theory...capable of reshaping society *for life*, rather than persist as the traditional study of the beauty and form of accomplished works,” *Ibid.*

<sup>1358</sup> *Ibid.*

among Marcuse's theories of art, alienation, and the humanities constitute the decisive structural and philosophical unity of his work."<sup>1359</sup> Higher education, under the sway of commodity capitalism, deadens this emancipatory impulse and leads, instead, to further alienation through integration into the *status quo* and it is against *this* phenomenon that Marcuse's aesthetic education manifests:

Alienation, in [Marcuse's] estimation, is thought to be the result of *training people to forget* their authentic human nature – its essential internal turmoil and social potential – *by educationally eradicating* the realm where this knowledge is considered to be best preserved, that is, *the humanities*.<sup>1360</sup>

Technical rationality, enmeshed with commodity fetishism to the benefit of the Establishment, militates against the desublimation (in an emancipatory sense) of the sensuousness of the pleasure principle, resulting in the surplus repression of *Eros and Civilization*. This aspect of “authentic human nature” is suppressed through education, both formal and informal. Informally, technical rationality demands efficiency and productivity, antithetical to the gratification of pleasure except on the limited terms of the euphoric indulgences of commodity capitalism. Formally, it manifests in the realm of higher education through a diminishing role of the humanities, especially aesthetic education, and the increasing role of degree programs geared towards creating efficient cogs in the machine of capitalism.<sup>1361</sup> The “turmoil” and “tension” of human nature, necessary for dialectical growth (for Peirce as well as Marcuse), is supplanted with the “happy consciousness” of euphoria within the advanced one-dimensional society.

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<sup>1359</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1360</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1361</sup> “Marcuse was appalled at what he saw as the displacement of the humanities in the 1970s by a form of higher education that had become mainly scientific and technical and that primarily stood in service to the needs of commerce, industry, and the military,” *Ibid.*

“Alienation is seen as the result of mis-education or half-education that leads people to accept sensual anesthetization and social amnesia as normal” and “making a living becomes more important than making a life.”<sup>1362</sup>

As such, Marcuse came to view aesthetic education and art as “*countermovements to alienation*” entailing a new “*aesthetic rationality*”<sup>1363</sup> thought to “transcend the prevailing logic of performance and achievement”<sup>1364</sup> indicative of technical rationality. Prior to *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Marcuse argued that art has a direct and immediate role in teaching “radical action and human fulfillment”<sup>1365</sup> rather than merely playing a symbolic, indirect role of inspiration and the further cultivation of negative thinking. Art, like negative thinking, preserves the dialectical tension between the *ideal* (what is not) and the *real* (what is), in contrast to the prevailing philosophical trend of positivism which engages the latter while relegating the former to mere metaphysical speculation best discarded. As such, Marcuse’s is inexorably driven, by the terms of his unique brand of critical theory, to a Utopian position, offering the ideal in light of the negation of the real.

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<sup>1362</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1363</sup> As Marcuse said in one of his letters to the Chicago surrealists in 1972: “the aesthetic rationality is twofold: (1) it establishes and preserves the link between the given universe and that of the work of art, (2) it invokes the images of liberation as those of a possible reality, viewed from the given reality,” Marcuse, “Letters to the Chicago Surrealists,” *Op. Cit.*, 184.

<sup>1364</sup> Reitz, *Art, Liberation, and the Humanities: A Critical Engagement with Herbert Marcuse*, *Op. Cit.*, 11.

<sup>1365</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter 11

### Critical Theory and its Discontents

Throughout my investigation of Marcuse, I have drawn brief comparisons to the work of Peirce, noting here and there where their respective theories both seem to align and where they seem to diverge. Both are considered central figures in their respective schools, yet both bring their own, unique visions to bear upon those discussions, sometimes placing themselves in a state of relative tension with their compatriots in pragmatism and critical theory, respectively. Although it is important (to borrow the phrase from Marcuse) not to “one-dimensionalize” the traditions too extravagantly, subsuming the idiosyncrasies and unique perspectives of the various members of each school into a completely artificial, singular philosophy, nevertheless a general overview of pragmatism’s relationship to critical theory is important for my purposes here. To bring Peirce into conversation with Marcuse and suggest that what unifies their respective projects far outweighs what divides them, I will first address two key critiques from Marcuse’s fellow critical theorists and investigate to what degree *Peircean* pragmatism is compatible with *Marcusean* critical theory.

From the outset, critical theory has not looked upon pragmatism with a particularly favorable eye. For the first general critical theorists, Horkheimer chief among them, their introduction to pragmatism came through the perspective of William James



who was far more widely read than Peirce.<sup>1366</sup> Although Harvard had produced Peirce's *Collected Papers* by that time, it was still James, not Peirce, who popularized the term "pragmatism" and introduced it to the world. Further, James famously coined the phrase "cash value" in reference to pragmatism's point and purpose and, as we saw earlier, deviated wildly enough from Peirce's original position that the latter felt he had to rename his philosophy "pragmaticism." Of course, the phrase "cash value" would not sit well with a group of social theorists critical of the indoctrinating tendencies of modern capitalism and they came to view pragmatism as yet one more indication that even the realm of *philosophy* had succumbed to capitalism's insidious thrall.

But that unfortunate phrase by James was only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. The more substantive critiques revolved around pragmatism's apparent reduction of theory to practical action, where all that is "meaningful" (or, in some iterations, all that is "true") is so only to the degree that it "cashes out" in practical experiences for the individual him or herself. Instead of a philosophy which created and/or analyzed *values* (ends in themselves), pragmatism came to be seen as purely *instrumental*, concerned exclusively with the ways in which an individual can productively and efficiently make his or her way in a (profoundly indoctrinating) milieu. In this sense, pragmatism became just another offshoot of positivism wherein philosophy is reduced to little more than reifying and apologetic of the domineering Establishment. This interpretation gave pragmatism an air of selfishness and greed, absolved, as it appeared to be, of any dynamic exploration of intersubjectivity and solidarity. Further, with pragmatism's

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<sup>1366</sup> Even Joseph Brent, the most famous chronicler of Peirce's life, was surprised by his first encounter with Peirce's work in 1957 and the reference to Peirce as the founder of pragmatism, noting, "the idea that it was Peirce rather than William James who originated pragmatism denied what was then the accepted attribution," Joseph Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), xiii.

alliance with a “method of science,” the Weberian concern was all-pervasive: pragmatism’s instrumental orientation resulted in an exploitation of nature to achieve personal satisfaction, science was a means of technical control and domination of the environment, and all that “mattered” was a process of inquiry that was as cold and impersonal as it was calculating and myopic. This was the general trajectory of Horkheimer’s robust and scathing critique of pragmatism as he articulated it in his chapter “Means and Ends” in *Eclipse of Reason*.

As I highlighted, Peirce was adamant that the trajectory of inquiry not be distorted by socio-political concerns. Nevertheless, as Anderson, Talisse, and others rightly note, Peirce was certainly alive to the socio-political *problems* that emerge historically to hamper inquiry’s unfolding and, by constructing an ideal community of inquiries, implicitly aligned himself with a social theory at least in so far as he articulated an *ideal* social structure for inquiry to unfold. How can it be said that Peirce was offering anything even remotely resembling a critical theory if he maintained that philosophy ought never be subjugated to socio-political concerns? Ingram, for example, defines the project of critical theory as follows:

Unlike most contemporary theories of society, whose primary aim is to provide the best description and explanation of social phenomenon, critical theories are chiefly concerned with evaluating the freedom, justice, and happiness of societies. In their concern with values they show themselves more akin to moral philosophy than to predictive science.<sup>1367</sup>

Logic (central to Peirce’s method of inquiry) was a *normative* science, resting upon ethics, and ethics, in turn, resting upon aesthetics. The abductive component of inquiry utilized a free-play of imagination to hypothesize goals, values and ends to which, only

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<sup>1367</sup> David Ingram, introduction to *Critical Theory: The Essential Readings* (New York: Paragon House, 1992), xx.

secondarily, the inductive and deductive modes of logic would then either verify or invalidate. “Practics,” or “antethics,” as he called it, “is the theory of the conformity of action to an ideal.”<sup>1368</sup> “Ethics,” on the contrary, “involves more than the theory of such conformity; namely, it involves the theory of the ideal itself, the nature of the *summum bonum*.”<sup>1369</sup> Both are requisite for the flourishing of inquiry. The “error” of writers on ethics often manifests as a conflation of “an ideal of conduct with a motive to action. The truth is that these two objects belong to different categories. Every action has a motive; but an ideal only belongs to a line [of] conduct which is deliberate.”<sup>1370</sup> Whereas “practics” aids an individual in correlating his or her actions to pre-established ends (instrumentalism), “ethics” is the creation and analysis of the ideal ends, themselves. Just as “action” is not the be-all, end-all of Peircean pragmatism, nor is “practics” (instrumentalism) the be-all, end-all of Peircean pragmatism, either. The brute reduction

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<sup>1368</sup> Charles S. Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, 8 Volumes (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1931 – 1936), CP 1.573. I will use the standard designation “CP” for here on.

<sup>1369</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1370</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.574. If every action has a motive, as Peirce claimed, but ideals belong to the category of deliberation, it remains to be seen what the connection is between “motive” and “deliberation.” For Peirce, “deliberation” was a uniquely human trait, meant to supplant, where possible, the baser instintual drives shared by animals and humans, alike. As he said: “The instincts of the lower animals answer their purposes much more unerringly than a discursive understanding could do...A deliberate logical faculty, therefore, has in man to take their place; and the sole function of this logical deliberation is to grind off the arbitrary and the individualistic character of thought. Hence, wherever the arbitrary and the individualistic is particularly prejudicial, there logical deliberation, or discourse of reason, must be allowed as much play as possible,” *Ibid.*, CP 1.178. As with the relationship between “ethics” and “practics,” though the two are distinct, both are operative in inquiry, as is the case with motive and deliberation: deliberation seeks ideals which is all well and good but the *seeking* of an ideal is not the same as the attainment (or approximation) of an ideal. Action has its place, too, namely, in the very act of inquiry and experimentation. Deliberation aims at the goals worthy of pursuit which provides the motive for actions taken in the grinding out of the means to achieve those ends. Stripped of deliberation, all that remains are motives to act which resonates with pure instrumentalism: motives to act to what end? To the ends prescribed for us should we allow our ability to deliberate to shrivel into obscurity thereby the negating our potential to set goals for ourselves. Thus, deliberation creates the ends which provides the motivation for action, not the other way around as some detractors of pragmatism falsely assume (i.e., Peirce was *not* claiming that practical actions dictate the ends but, rather, the ends [autonomously sought without external mandate] ought to dictate practical actions): “the two implications of pragmatism that concepts are purposive, and that their meaning lies in their conceivable practical bearings, the former is the more fundamental” where “by ‘practical’ I mean apt to affect conduct; and by conduct, voluntary action that is self-controlled, i.e. controlled by adequate deliberation,” *Ibid.*, CP 8.322.

of thought to action, of ethics to practices, is a gross misreading of Peirce that, I maintain, informed many an ill-begotten critique of the father of pragmatism from the start.

Further, although Peirce was ever reluctant to associate philosophy with socio-political concerns, as Anderson notes, Peirce was nevertheless concerned with “the structure and health of the polis.”<sup>1371</sup> Especially in “Fixation of Belief,” “in asking how a community should govern the processes and contexts of fixing its beliefs, we ask not only about a specific kind of political action, but also about how we might envision the constituency of a healthy community.”<sup>1372</sup> As I’ve demonstrated throughout this project, Peirce *was* concerned with offering a “description and explanation of social phenomenon,” at least insofar as social phenomenon may influence the trajectory of inquiry (and the ways in which it can contribute to its flourishing). Of primary concern throughout Peirce’s career (forged in part, no doubt, by the intransigence and meddling of a bureaucratic apparatus that continuously stifled his innovations in science and logic), *was* “the freedom, justice, and happiness of societies,” the freedom to *inquire* without obstacle or externally prescribed values that narrow the otherwise near-infinitely wide channels of the human imagination. Certainly these issues were manifest in his critique of the “method of authority” and his concern that ulterior motives, the greed of capitalism chief among them, infiltrated an otherwise ideal version of the scientific method that would bring about an unlimited, democratic, egalitarian community free to follow inquiry wherever it may lead.

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<sup>1371</sup> Douglas Anderson, “A Political Dimension of Fixing Belief,” in *The Rule of Reason: The Philosophy of Charles S. Peirce*, ed. Jacqueline Brunning and Paul Forster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 224.

<sup>1372</sup> *Ibid.*

Of primary concern to Horkheimer was the belief that philosophy had degenerated from its analysis of social values to nothing more than this “predictive science.” This emphasis on bare factual analysis lost its critical edge. In essence, the concern was that late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy fell under the spell of capital (productivity and efficiency chief among its goals) and succumbed to the technical rationality of the age. With Weber lingering in the background, “science” and “technology” more often than not took on a reifying tone: they were instruments of capital and domination and thus any philosophy, pragmatism chief among them, that took up a scientific method, must, in turn, be nothing more than a philosophy of apologetic acquiescence to the status quo. As Adorno and Horkheimer said, for example, “kings, no less directly than businessmen, control technology; it is as democratic as the economic system with which it is bound up. Technology is the essence of this knowledge. It does not work by concepts and images, by the fortunate insight, but refers to method, the exploitation of others’ work, and capital.”<sup>1373</sup> This reduces rationality to its pure “instrumental”<sup>1374</sup> form such that “what men want to learn from nature is how to use it in order wholly to dominate it and other men. That is the only aim.”<sup>1375</sup> But Peirce was alive to this critique, so much so that he claimed, “the *worst* feature of the present state of things is that the great majority of the members of many scientific societies, and a large part of others, are men whose chief interest in science is as a means of gaining money, and who have a contempt, or half-contempt, for pure science.”<sup>1376</sup> Further, critical theorists were concerned that an acquiescence to this standard of efficiency and

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<sup>1373</sup> Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, “The Concept of Enlightenment,” in *Critical Theory: The Essential Readings*, ed. David Ingram (New York: Paragon House, 1998), 49.

<sup>1374</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1375</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1376</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.143. *My emphasis.*

productivity lead to a kind of mass mentality, a one-dimensionalizing, in Marcuse's terms. As Adorno and Horkheimer said, men become "mere species beings, exactly like one another through isolation in the forcibly united collectivity. The oarsmen, who cannot speak to one another, are each of them yoked in the same rhythm as the modern worker in the factory, movie theater, and collective."<sup>1377</sup> These conditions "made the suppressed men dumb and separated them from truth."<sup>1378</sup>

This was a concern for Peirce, as well. Indeed, Peirce's critique of the method of authority *was* a critique of instrumentalism, as Horkheimer defined it, in its most vibrant and vitriolic form. Peirce noted that the authority wields "the various forms of organized force in the state" and "will never be convinced that dangerous reasoning ought not to be suppressed in some way."<sup>1379</sup> Further, "if liberty of speech is to be untrammelled from the grosser forms of constraint, then uniformity of opinion will be secured by a moral terrorism to which the respectability of society will give its thorough approval."<sup>1380</sup> Just as Adorno and Horkheimer were concerned that the mass of mankind had been made "dumb and separated from truth," Peirce said, "when society is broken into bands, now warring, now allied, now for a time subordinated one to another, man loses his conceptions of truth and of reason."<sup>1381</sup> For Adorno and Horkheimer, and for Peirce as well, it was "truth" that has been denied the individual living under such an authority, and it is this "truth for...which he fights."<sup>1382</sup> The only litmus test for "truth" in a state of authority is "what the state thinks,"<sup>1383</sup> making its claims to knowledge reifying and

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<sup>1377</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Op. Cit.*, 55.

<sup>1378</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1379</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.386.

<sup>1380</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1381</sup> Peirce, *Ibid.*, CP 1.59

<sup>1382</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1383</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.385.

apologetic. For, as we recall, the method of authority does not seek to fix belief in the individual “*merely*, but in the *community*.”<sup>1384</sup> As Peirce said:

Wherever there is an aristocracy, or a guild, or any association of a class of men whose interests depend, or are supposed to depend, on certain propositions, there will be inevitably found some traces of this natural product of social feeling. Cruelties always accompany this system; and when it is consistently carried out, they become atrocities of the most horrible kind in the eyes of any rational man.<sup>1385</sup>

Like the “oarsmen” in Adorno and Horkheimer, the individuals under such authority become nothing more than “intellectual slaves”<sup>1386</sup> to the authority. Where, in Adorno and Horkheimer’s terms, collectivity is “forcibly united,” the authority perpetuates itself so long as, in Peirce words, “men are in such a state of culture that one opinion does not influence another – that is, so long as they cannot put two and two together.”<sup>1387</sup>

But, for Peirce, out of this society a class of individuals will be “raised above that condition,” individuals that “possess a wider sort of social feeling” who are capable of seeing that “men in other counties and in other ages have held to very different doctrines from those which they themselves have been brought up to believe.”<sup>1388</sup> I argue that these Peircean individuals who are capable of ascertaining the “accident of their having been taught as they have...that has caused them to believe as they do and not far differently”

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<sup>1384</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.378.

<sup>1385</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.379. It is not entirely clear what Peirce meant here by “natural social feeling.” However, in the same passage he said both that “this method has, from the earliest times, been one of the chief means of upholding correct theological and political doctrines, and of preserving their universal or catholic character” and that “it is natural, therefore, that sympathy and fellowship should thus produce a most ruthless power,” *Ibid.* Although Peirce provided no justification for why such a “social feeling” was by any means “natural,” the “social feeling” he was describing would seem to be that the drive for “fellowship” often manifests through ruthless methods of preserving a universal, binding series of doctrines to keep individuals in concert. This sort of “top down” pseudo-solidarity is frequently juxtaposed throughout Peirce’s work with the “bottom up” solidarity of individuals merging their interests, autonomously, with their neighbors, as in the method of inquiry (and, intriguingly, in the “Gospel of Christ” that he juxtaposed with the “Gospel of Greed”).

<sup>1386</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.381.

<sup>1387</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1388</sup> *Ibid.*

are engaging in precisely the sort of “negative thinking” that the critical theorists champion. I argue, in short, that these individuals of “wider social feeling” *are* critical theorists. Like the members of the Frankfurt School, these Peircean individuals have to develop not only a direct critique of the historical situatedness of the current milieu, but must also cultivate an historical awareness of the establishments of the past, the beliefs of “other nations and other centuries; thus giving rise to doubts in their minds.”<sup>1389</sup> Ultimately, for Peirce and the critical theorists both, “the willful adherence” to these indoctrinating beliefs, and “the arbitrary forcing” of these beliefs upon others, “must, therefore, both be given up.”<sup>1390</sup>

Peirce juxtaposed this faux community with an ideal community of inquirers who are *free* to inquire as they will, in coordinated, communal dialogue. Undoubtedly, this is what attracted Habermas to Peirce from the start. Although Habermas had his own critique of pragmatism, his theory of “communicative rationality consists...in formal procedures of free, reciprocal conversation,” implying “an *ideally* democratic and egalitarian community.”<sup>1391</sup> Although Habermas held a more complimentary view of pragmatism, at least, a Peircean *form* of pragmatism, Horkheimer read into pragmatism (Peirce included) all of the worst ills of the modern era: reduction of theory to practical activity, philosophy’s assimilation into technical rationality, and a dissolution of values and objective deployments of reason in favor of pure, cold, calculating, subjective forms of instrumental rationality.

Broadly construed, instrumental rationality is the deployment of human reason solely to ascertain the means to achieve some specific, *prescribed* end. Though in a

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<sup>1389</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1390</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.382.

<sup>1391</sup> Ingram, “Introduction,” *Op. Cit.*, xxxii.



practical sense, instrumental reason is clearly critical to our successful navigation of the inroads of life, it has nevertheless been criticized as reducing human cognitive capacities to the bare utility of achieving practical ends while sacrificing those capacities that ought otherwise be aimed at loftier goals such as the attainment of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, that is, the increase of human understanding in general and the elevation of the human condition. The agent of instrumental rationality constructs the means to achieve prescribed ends whereas the agent of non-instrumental rationality constructs the ends, themselves, namely, “values.” The agent of instrumental rationality deploys his or her rational capacities as a “tool” or “instrument,” a means of achieving whatever the goals may be, whereas the agent of non-instrumental rationality uses reason to divine which goals *ought* to be pursued. Pragmatism, with its scientific method of inquiry and experimental method of refining and formulating beliefs, has been accused of not only instrumentalizing rationality for the cold, calculating process of inquiry as a “predictive science,” but, too, has instrumentalized *nature* as nothing more than an “obstacle” or a “means” of achieving its practical pursuits.

Part and parcel with the fairly ubiquitous adaptation of Weberian “technical rationality,” critical theorists have decried instrumental rationality as a fundamental facet in the indoctrination and alienation of the industrial milieu. In Marcuse, for example, the one-dimensional society, the performance principle, surplus scarcity, commodity fetishism, capitalism, and technical rationality conspired together to set the goals *for* the individuals within the industrial society. Marcuse’s critique was often framed in the language of organism/environment transaction, just as it is with Peirce,<sup>1392</sup> though for

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<sup>1392</sup> Peirce’s radical pedagogy was potentially influenced by his father, Benjamin, and his first wife, Melusina. His father “was at the center of the movement to improve American education, especially higher

Marcuse the concern was that the one-dimensional society dictated the terms of adaptation *for* the organism, terms that dictated goals of efficiency and productivity conducive to the perpetuation of the alienating and indoctrinating power of commodity capitalism. We see this in Marcuse's critique of the changing trajectory of higher education. The passage is powerful and bears repeating:

Once upon a time, it was the proclaimed principle of great bourgeois philosophy that the youth 'ought to be educated not for the present but for a better future condition of the human race, that is, for the idea of humanity.' Now the council for Higher Education is called upon to study the 'detailed needs' of the established society so that the colleges know 'what kinds of graduates to produce.'<sup>1393</sup>

In a passage of shocking resonance with Marcuse's critique of contemporary higher education in a system of capital, and likely stemming from Peirce's misbegotten experiences in gravimetrics in the early part of his career,<sup>1394</sup> Peirce said:

They want *results*, tangible to them. The teacher is dismissed as a failure, or, if he is allowed another chance, he will take good care to reverse the method of his teaching and give them *results* -- especially, as that is the lazy way. These are some of the causes of there being so few strong reasoners in the world ...

We see non-instrumental rationality pitted against instrumental rationality quite explicitly by the terms as we have generally defined them: education has shifted under commodity capitalism from *setting* goals (elevating the condition of the human race) to *adapting* goals (efficiency and productivity in the machine of industry) as institutes of higher

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education in the science," Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life, Op. Cit.*, 31. His wife, "Zina," was a feminist who focused explicitly on improving the potential for higher education for women, becoming "one of the organizers of the Women's Education Association," *Ibid*, 65.

<sup>1393</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 27.

<sup>1394</sup> After becoming bored with his repetitive routine, Peirce "quickly expanded his researches to include the theory of errors of observation, the logic and mathematics of measurement as such, and other, more interesting problems associated with gravimetrics, but the Survey proved increasingly resistant to these lines of original research and pressured him constantly for 'results,'" Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life, Op. Cit.*, 93.

education become little more than degree factories and the means of achieving goals prescribed *for* the students *by* society.

Marcuse was clearly antagonistic to instrumental rationality, especially framed in the Weberian context, and called for (depending on the period in which he was writing) either a return to the values of bourgeois culture that championed Truth, Beauty, and Goodness over practical concerns or else a complete break from capitalism's co-option of these goals within the stifling milieu of one-dimensional society.<sup>1395</sup> This explains, in no small part, his advocacy of the humanities as sites of negative thinking and radical forms of protest in both the political and aesthetic realms. If instrumental reason constructs the means to achieve prescribed goals, and if the prescribed goals are efficiency and productivity conducive to the individual organism's adaptation into a milieu of commodity capitalism, then negative thinking, art, and political protest transcend these goals and effectively construct *new* goals, with a *new* rationality, aiming towards a more emancipated world. Once these new goals have been established, reason would be deployed to ascertain the means to achieve these ends. This would not longer be the *exclusively* instrumental reason Marcuse (and the other critical theorists) lamented, but an instrumental deployment of reason to ascertain the means to achieve the ends freely postulated by a mind no longer at the mercy of technical rationality and the logic of modernity. There is always a motive to act, as Peirce would say, but the ideal deployment of this kind of "instrumentalism" would follow *from* the autonomous deliberation of the ends themselves (the "objective" form of reason Horkheimer championed) rather than

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<sup>1395</sup> That's not to say that Marcuse "abandoned" the goals of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, only that, in some portions of his career, he demanded a complete *break* from the ways in which these terms were defined in the bourgeois area and *new* conceptions forged of an emancipated rationality through negative thinking (in general) and aesthetics (in particular).

passively accepting those ends and then deploying reason *exclusively* for the instrumental sorting out of the means to achieve them. But a question remains: what *if* these new goals are not, in fact, achievable? Do we simply grind out the means, altering them again and again, all to no avail? Does it become a kind of Sisyphian task in which we have a motive to act but those actions lead nowhere?

One of the more explicit differences between Peirce's pragmatism and Marcuse's critical theory, one that I will explore further in the concluding chapter of this project, was Peirce's insistence that the precise *content* of future beliefs cannot be claimed with apodictic certainty *a priori*. "Truth," at the end of the long run, is a specific goal with some specific content (for Peirce, Truth will be that belief that will, hypothetically, be forever beyond the possibility of revision and never subject to doubt). As Peirce said: "for experimental inquiry sets out with a hypothesis; upon which it bases predictions as to the issue of experiments, and it is left to the future experiment to bring forth the conclusion from the womb of the future."<sup>1396</sup> Peirce often referenced the *ultimate* true belief we are "destined"<sup>1397</sup> to one day reach, should the method of inquiry be engaged and push far enough. This hypothesis likely stemmed from Peirce's cosmology that stipulated that the universe, in general, was moving from absolute indeterminacy<sup>1398</sup> to absolute lawlike determinacy.<sup>1399</sup> The more determinate the future (indeed, absolute

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<sup>1396</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.666

<sup>1397</sup> "I will assume, then, that scientific doubt never gets completely set to rest in regard to any question until, at last, the very truth about that question becomes established. Taking the phenomenon as a whole, then, without considering how it is brought about, science is foredestined to reach the truth of every problem with as unerring an infallibility as the instincts of animals do their work, this latter result like the former being brought about by some process of which we are as yet unable to give any account," *Ibid.*, CP 7.7

<sup>1398</sup> "In the beginning was nullity, or absolute indetermination," *Ibid.*, CP 1.447.

<sup>1399</sup> "We look back toward a point in the infinitely distant past when there was no law but mere indeterminacy; we look forward to a point in the infinitely distant future when there will be no indeterminacy or chance but a complete reign of law," *Ibid.*, CP 1.409.

determinacy) the more static the content of Truth ought to be. Hence Peirce's (rather poetic) conception that future experiments ought to bring forth the conclusions from the womb of the future. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the present, to assume, *a priori*, the exact content of what those true beliefs will, in the future, infallibly *be* is nothing more than a blockage of inquiry. Any such speculation as to the content of these true beliefs (speculation which is welcome so long as it represents the *beginning* of further inquiry and not the end) must, necessarily, be presented in terms of "probability." For Peirce, we may conjecture about the content of these ultimate beliefs so long as we, as good fallibilists, remain in the only, and ever, highly probable, and never apodictically certain, *a priori*. Although this may not "solve" the problem of "how can we seek that which we don't know?" it can, at least, explain it: for Peirce, there *is* a concrete, determinate answer to every question which the method of inquiry, over the long run, if duly persisted in, is "destined" to uncover.

Add to this the fact that Peirce wrote little to nothing on socio-political philosophy (for reasons I've discussed), what we have are nothing but the most general hypotheses about the structure of any future polis. If we are, as Peirce believed, truly destined to reach the Truth, and if the only method that *can* reach the Truth is the method of inquiry, and the only socio-political coordination that can sustain the method of inquiry is a non-authoritarian democratic coordination of *some kind*, it would follow that Peirce does, nascently, anticipate a future socio-political coordination that is *some kind* of non-authoritarian democratic system. But the precise *content* of that socio-political coordination must remain only in the realm of possibility, probability, and hypothesis: to assume, from the start of inquiry, what the answers *must be* is to succumb to the type of

anti-scientific blockade of inquiry that Peirce resisted all his life. *People*, that is, the inquirers *themselves*, must discover the specifics of that future for *themselves* through the long run process of inquiry.

Marcuse, however, deployed his conception of negative thinking to negate the stultifying aspects of the modern milieu and to postulate the radically other (if technical rationality is the problem, we need an aesthetic rationality; if the performance principle is the problem, we need to find ways to alleviate the repression of the pleasure principle; and so forth). The *goals*, though still relatively nebulous, were concrete enough to demand the question: how can we get there? Marcuse's critical theory was extraordinarily precise in its ability to critique what *is* and immensely imaginative in postulating what *ought* and what *might otherwise be*, but constructing the bridge that reaches from here to there remains relatively obscure in terms of some concrete plan. Rae notes, for example, notes this "ambiguity that runs throughout Marcuse's thought between the incorporating capacity of the logic of modernity and the means of affecting radical social change."<sup>1400</sup>

Specifically, Rae says:

It is not easy to see how Marcuse is able to reconcile his claim that individual emancipation can be achieved through authentic art, which is grounded in a specific economic revolution, with his claim that individual and social liberation can only be grounded in an authentic aesthetic. By making individual liberation dependent on an authentic aesthetic that is grounded in an economic revolution that he maintains is forestalled by the logic of the socio-economic formation that he aims to negate, it is difficult not to come to the conclusion that the central theses of Marcuse's philosophy are, at best, based on blind faith in the individual's capacity to liberate himself, or, at worst, simply irreconcilable.<sup>1401</sup>

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<sup>1400</sup> Rae, "Marcuse, Aesthetics, and the Logic of Modernity," *Op. Cit.*, 395.

<sup>1401</sup> *Ibid.*, 395 – 396.

Both Peirce and Marcuse create philosophical methods to critique the modern milieu but only Peirce refrains from postulating concrete “must bes” into the future, allowing future beliefs the status of probability and hypothesis *only*, and allowing free inquiry to bring them about without needing to postulate determinate content *a priori*. Nor was Peirce relying on “blind faith” but, rather, an intriguing coordination of evidence gleaned from the logic of inquiry (whether it be phenomenological experience or the cosmological make-up of the cosmos, everything *appears* to moving from absolute chaos to absolute order, an hypothesis that some modern scientists are now actually corroborating<sup>1402</sup>) and the progression of science in general (knowledge, be maintained, was moving forward, though not always steadily nor in a perfectly straight line, nevertheless, consensus was *increasing* on matters long-debated through communal inquiry rather than *decreasing*). True, all of this may be folly on Peirce’s part (though, I maintain, he presents quite a convincing argument for both as I’ve touched upon throughout this investigation), but if it is folly, it is at least a *reason* to stipulate a destined end of inquiry, that Truth exists and is hypothetically attainable in the long run, and not *mere* “blind faith” as if it were no more than a stab in the dark. Thus, though perhaps we can ascribe no *absolute* confidence that the goals either philosopher poses are, in fact, achievable, by providing a *method* of belief formation that is the most likely candidate for eradicating doubt in the long run, combined with Peirce’s ruminations on cosmology, logic, and inquiry, and by allowing the content of future beliefs from the perspective of the present to remain relatively indeterminate (though, as Peirce believed, the content of future beliefs *are* determinate, we simply haven’t discovered that content yet), we have reason to hope (and not just

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<sup>1402</sup> As I mentioned in a previous footnote, scientists from the University of the Basque Country in Bilbao and Spain’s University of Salamanca have published papers on their findings that the universe is *literally* concretizing as time, itself, is slowing down towards absolute zero.

“mere” hope) that the deployment of instrumentalism *after* these goals have been postulated isn’t grinding its gears in utter futility. It is harder, I maintain, to make the same argument for Marcuse.

Now, it’s true that pragmatism has often been associated with instrumental reasoning at its most cold and calculating, in no small part due to James’s unfortunate deployment of the catchy phrase “cash value” in terms of assessing the efficacy of our beliefs. If the value of our beliefs is nothing more than how efficiently they “cash out” in practical activity, this clearly becomes an example of instrumental reasoning. Through a Marcusean lens, it is easy to see how such a definition of the value of belief is conducive not to *emancipation* but further *indoctrination* into a system where the beliefs and goals of individual adaptation are dictated by an alienating and indoctrinating milieu. What “cashes out” *can* only “cash out” in a milieu of prescribed goals that are anything but Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and the elevation of the human condition. As Cotkin notes, “Marxist critics would come to fixate upon the metaphor as indicative of James’s supposed celebration of the crass values of the marketplace or as proof positive that Jamesian pragmatism was the philosophical expression of American capitalism.”<sup>1403</sup> As James himself admitted, critics see it as a “characteristically American movement...excellently fitted for the man on the street, who naturally hates theory and wants cash returns immediately.”<sup>1404</sup>

James attempted to explain the use of this phrase in his essay “The Pragmatist Account of Truth and Its Misunderstandings.” He started his defense by noting that “the

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<sup>1403</sup> George Cotkin. “William James and the Cash-Value Metaphor,” *Etc: A Review of General Semantics* 42 (1985): 37-46, 37.

<sup>1404</sup> William James, “The Pragmatist Account of Truth and its Misunderstandings,” *The Philosophical Review* 17, no. 1 (Jan. 1908): 1 – 17, 3.



commonest mistake” of critics of pragmatism is the assumption that the tradition is little more than a “*reediting of positivism*.”<sup>1405</sup> Lumping “scepticism, positivism, and agnosticism” together, James argued that all, to varying degrees and in different ways, “either suggest or declare that real truth, absolute truth, is inaccessible to us, and that we must fain put up with relative or phenomenal truth as its next best substitute.”<sup>1406</sup> Positivism, specifically, is “cheerful” about that assessment, calling “real truth sour grapes” and considers “phenomenal truth quite sufficient for all our ‘practical’ purposes.”<sup>1407</sup> James responded that, “in point of fact nothing could be farther from all this than what pragmatism has to say of truth.”<sup>1408</sup> Pragmatism’s answer, James maintained, “is intended to cover the most complete truth that can be conceived of, ‘absolute’ truth, if you like, as well as truth of the most relative and imperfect description.”<sup>1409</sup>

To some degree, this accurately portrayed Peirce’s intentions. Specifically, James was quite right in highlighting “truth” both in its “ideal”/“absolute” sense *as well as* (and this is key) “truth” in its “relative and imperfect description.” To the former, Peirce did, indeed, postulate an ideal goal of inquiry as Truth in the absolute sense. To the latter, Peirce, in keeping with this thoroughgoing fallibilism and adherence to the first rule of reason, maintained that all of our beliefs are, no matter how apparently secure, always provisional and never complete. In this way, Peirce differentiates between “Truth” in the long run, and “true beliefs” manifest in the here and now.<sup>1410</sup> Peirce consequently only

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<sup>1405</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>1406</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1407</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1408</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1409</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1410</sup> The former is the hypothetical goal existing at the end of the long run, ever-approximated, never fully achieved, whereas the former are defined in practical terms as “guiding principles” that lead

ever put a relative value on “true beliefs” as a stepping-stone to the greater goal of absolute Truth in the long run. This is an important distinction to make, as it shifts the focus of inquiry from the practical efficacy of “true beliefs” that help navigate us through the world unproblematically, to the loftier goal of absolute Truth viewed from the perspective of the long run. So, too, does it shift *subjective* goals (I wish to navigate myself successfully through the world) to *objective* goals (only together can we, communally, attain the postulated goal of Truth that is *more* than any finite number of individuals have to say about it). Further, as Brent notes, Peirce championed “the reintroduction of the *value* judgments of the scientist as a normal element of the scientific method,”<sup>1411</sup> not the mere cold calculation pragmatism is charged with.

I maintain that if Peirce ever went mad and actually used a “slipshod”<sup>1412</sup> term like “cash value” to apply to his conception of “truth,” it would *not* apply to “absolute” Truth in the long run. As Peirce said, after all, and quite explicitly: “truth is not something to be pushed like a business.”<sup>1413</sup> Truth, in this ideal sense, is the means to no greater end than itself. “True beliefs,” in the qualified sense that we’ve discussed, certainly have a “cash value” component insofar as they help navigate the individual through life successfully. However, even here, the navigation through life is only *part* of the value of “true beliefs,” more importantly, they are an indication that Truth has, to a relative degree, been attained. I argue, for Peirce, we don’t achieve “true beliefs” as a *means* of attaining Truth, nor even, really, as a means of navigating our world

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unproblematically to the conclusions we expect in the here and now. That a belief, as a guiding principle, *does* lead unproblematically to expected results is a good indication that Truth, to that relative degree, has been better approximated.

<sup>1411</sup> Brent, *Charles S. Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 5.

<sup>1412</sup> James, “The Pragmatist Account of Truth and its Misunderstandings,” *Op. Cit.*, 1.

<sup>1413</sup> A letter from Peirce to Francis C. Russell, August of 1894, cited in Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 224.

successfully. The value of “true beliefs” lies in their participation along the long run towards Truth through inquiry. If they happen to be the *means* of successful navigation through life, successful life-navigation is only a side effect. Peirce was quite explicit on this point:

Truth is truth, whether it is opposed to the interests of society to admit it or not -- and that the notion that we must deny what it is not conducive to the stability of British society to affirm is the mainspring of the mendacity and hypocrisy which Englishmen so commonly regard as virtues. I must confess that I belong to that class of scallawags who purpose, with God's help, to look the truth in the face, whether doing so be conducive to the interests of society or not.<sup>1414</sup>

“Truth is truth,” an end in itself, that is not as a means to anything else, not even the interests of society.<sup>1415</sup> There is no “cash value” to it whatsoever. This is likewise corroborated in Peirce’s scathing critique of scientists who value money over the ultimate goal of Truth.<sup>1416</sup>

I argue, further, that neither was Peirce a positivist, not in the general sense James articulated here, nor the specific sense that Marcuse railed against in his own critique. If James was fair in saying that positivism calls “real truth sour grapes” and considers “phenomenal truth quite sufficient for all our ‘practical’ purposes,”<sup>1417</sup> it should be equally clear that Peirce did neither the one nor the other. Quite the opposite of calling real truth (what I take James to mean as absolute Truth) “sour grapes,” Peirce insisted

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<sup>1414</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.143.

<sup>1415</sup> That Peirce places the pursuit of Truth above “the interests of society” is ambiguous here. On the one hand, this could distance him further from the goals of the critical theorists who certainly had “the interest of society” as one of their chief goals. However, precisely because Peirce ties this in with his critique of capitalistically-minded scientists, it may *also* be read as a condemnation of “the interests” of *modern* society, with its emphasis on capital and, as Peirce often calls it, “The Gospel of Greed.” However, again, it is ambiguous.

<sup>1416</sup> For Peirce, “the worst feature of the present state of things is that the great majority of the members of many scientific societies, and a large part of others, are men whose chief interest in science is as a means of gaining money, and who have a contempt, or half-contempt, for pure science,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.143.

<sup>1417</sup> *Ibid.*

upon its potential attainment, not only that we *ought* to operate with it as a goal yet to be achieved, but also that we really *are* approximating it through inquiry over time. In contrast to positivism, Marcuse advocated “negative” thinking, the ability to conceive of alternative possibilities to what *is*, that is to say, to think *what is not*. The method of inquiry, for Peirce, relied upon precisely this component of potentiality for its success. Combining abduction and induction *with* deduction, Peirce’s method was ever forward thinking, ever ready to engage problems as they emerge from whatever source, embracing the opportunity to develop and improve existing beliefs. Indeed, Peirce’s fallibilism, itself, attests to the necessity of an anti-positivistic attitude: Peirce didn’t advocate lowering the epistemic bar of requirements for certainty but, rather, insisted on postponing certainty indefinitely while concurrently admitting to Truth’s increasing approximation. Admission of the incompleteness of our current beliefs is not the *end* of inquiry necessitating a demand to lower our epistemic expectations but the *beginning* of inquiry and *impetus* for further cognitive development. As James said, “this question of what truth would be like if did exist, belongs obviously to a purely speculative field of inquiry...it abstracts from facts altogether.”<sup>1418</sup> For Peirce, “facts speak only in the fallible voices of the guesses, conjectures, and hypotheses that imply them, deductively, and which are then verified,” or falsified, “inductively.”<sup>1419</sup> Thus, if positivism is the reduction of speculative theory to bare facts, as Marcuse argued it was, Peircean pragmatism is clearly *not* a form of positivism.<sup>1420</sup>

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<sup>1418</sup> James, “The Pragmatist Account of Truth and its Misunderstandings,” *Op. Cit.*, 2.

<sup>1419</sup> Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 11.

<sup>1420</sup> As we’ll see in Habermas’s critique, however, the divergence of theory and empirical facts presents Peirce with another problem, namely how it is that one abstracts from empirical data to prove that scientific progress is real, and that Truth is attainable, without succumbing to vicious circularity (the theory of scientific progress and Truth dictates which beliefs are “true,” but which beliefs are “true” is what demonstrates science’s progress and the postulation of Truth at the end of the long run).

The second major criticism that James addressed was the apparent pragmatic reduction of all theory to action, lending itself to the accusation that it is nothing more than instrumental rationality in its most practical manifestation. If our beliefs happen to “work well,” as James argued, the critic immediately leaps to the conclusion that this means, “in their immediate workings in the physical environment, their enabling us to make money, or gain some similar ‘practical’ advantage.”<sup>1421</sup> Without question, a person may *well* make money or gain some similar practical advantage if an individual maintains a robust set of “true beliefs” in a Peircean sense.<sup>1422</sup> But that these are contingent (and not necessary) side effects of inquiry’s quest for Truth in the long run cannot (and must not) be ignored.<sup>1423</sup> “Not crediting us with this rudimentary insight, our critics treat our view as offering itself exclusively to engineers, doctors, financiers, and men of action generally, who need some sort of rough and ready *Weltanschauung*, but have no time or wit to study genuine philosophy.”<sup>1424</sup> For Peirce, beliefs manifest as habit that, in turn, manifest as a predisposition towards regular patterns of practical activity. That is true. However, this is a far cry from the claim that pragmatism places as its *goal* “practical activity” to which belief formation is merely the means to that end. Peirce was quite explicit in rejecting the reduction of thought to action: “if pragmatism really made Doing to be the Be-all and the End-all of life, that would be its death. For to say that we live for the mere sake of action, as action, regardless of the thought it carries out, would be to say that there is no such thing as rational purport.”<sup>1425</sup> The manifestation of belief in

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<sup>1421</sup> James, “The Pragmatist Account of Truth and its Misunderstandings,” *Op. Cit.*, 3.

<sup>1422</sup> “It is quite true that, when the refined theoretic question that pragmatism begins with is once answer, secondary corollaries of a practical sort follow,” *Ibid.*

<sup>1423</sup> “Ideas do work thus, of course, immediately or remotely; but they work indefinitely inside of the mental world also,” *Ibid.*

<sup>1424</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1425</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.429

practical activity is a *symptom* of this process, not its termination and *certainly* not its goal. Critics who argue otherwise, James said, “ignore our primary step and its motive, and make the relation to action, which is our secondary achievement, primary.”<sup>1426</sup> As Peirce said, “every man of action is, must be, and ought to be, cunning, worldly, and dishonest, or what seems so to a man of pure science. When such men dispute, the dispute has some other object than the ascertainment of scientific truth.”<sup>1427</sup> Further, and quite explicitly, “pure science has nothing at all to do with *action*.”<sup>1428</sup> Although “in vital matters, it is quite otherwise” where “we must act in such matters,”<sup>1429</sup> this is the realm of instinct, not reason: “pure theoretical knowledge, or science, has nothing directly to say concerning practical matters, and nothing even applicable at all to vital crises. Theory is applicable to minor practical affairs; but matters of vital importance must be left to sentiment, that is, to instinct.”<sup>1430</sup>

As I’ve demonstrated, Peirce and James were not at all on the same wavelength when it came to many of the most central aspects of Peirce’s initial doctrine. In a letter to James, Peirce said quite bluntly, “you and Schiller carry pragmatism too far for me”<sup>1431</sup> and again in a different letter, “your mind and mine are as little adapted to understanding one another as two minds could be.”<sup>1432</sup> I heartily agree with scholars like Perry who note: “perhaps it would be correct, and just to all parties, to say that the modern

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<sup>1426</sup> James, “The Pragmatist Account of Truth and its Misunderstandings,” *Op. Cit.*, 4.

<sup>1427</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 4.34.

<sup>1428</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.635.

<sup>1429</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1636.

<sup>1430</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.637. However, once again this positioning of philosophy-science against instinct and “vital concerns” is a double-edged sword for our current exploration. On the one hand, philosophy-science would eschew the “practical concerns” of the modern age: capital, commodity, and so forth. On the other hand, “emancipation,” the dissolution of “alienation,” are certainly “vital concerns” which, according to Peirce, would likewise *not* be the concern of philosophy as he conceives it.

<sup>1431</sup> Quoted in Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, vol. 2 (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1935), 430.

<sup>1432</sup> Quoted in Perry, *Ibid.*, 431.

movement known as pragmatism is largely the result of James' misunderstanding of Peirce."<sup>1433</sup> Indeed, if "there are as many pragmatisms as there are pragmatists,"<sup>1434</sup> any critique that seeks to reduce a philosophical tradition that runs from Peirce, James, and Dewey through Adams, Royce, and Mead, to Papini, Rorty, and Davidson (naming but a few who have, over the years, either self-identified as a pragmatist or who have *been* identified as a pragmatist), to *one* man (James), to *one* phrase of one man ("cash-value"), welcomes more confusion than it offers substantive critique.

In "Means and Ends," Horkheimer outlined not only the defining characteristics of instrumental reason, which he likewise called "subjective reason," but pitted it against *objective* reason and demonstrated how modernity had given rise to an increased emphasis on the former to the detriment of the latter. With the fall of objective rationality, instrumental reason feeds into the indoctrinating milieu of capitalism in a critique that complements Marcuse's own.

Horkheimer began his critique by noting that the average man on the street, when asked "what reason *is*" will answer with a dismissive shrug, that "the concept of reason is self-explanatory," and that, if it is anything more than entirely an "superfluous" question, this man will answer that "reasonable things are things that are obviously useful, and that every reasonable man is supposed to be able to decide what is useful to him."<sup>1435</sup> Thus, instrumental rationality is both (a) directed exclusively to utility and practical affairs and

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<sup>1433</sup> Perry, *Ibid.*, 409. Further, "James amended Peirce's position (that ideas mean general rules for conduct) to his own stand that meanings can be reduced to a particular consequence," Patrick Kieran Dooley, *Pragmatism as Humanism: the Philosophy of William James* (New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1975), 119. Also, "Peirce was concerned with the practicality of consequences to bear out intellectual concepts, but...James was more concerned with particularity of consequences...James was concerned chiefly with the effect of thoughts on the individual and his particular acts; Peirce was concerned chiefly with the clarification of ideas," James Feibleman, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Charles S. Peirce: Interpreted as a System* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970), 303 – 304.

<sup>1434</sup> Cornelis De Waal, *On Pragmatism* (San Jose, California: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), ii.

<sup>1435</sup> Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (Continuum: New York, 2004), 3.

(b) subjective in so far as every, *individual* man is “supposed to be able to decide what is useful” to *him*, subjectively.

If individuals seek solely to avoid disappointment, to find what is “useful,” and have no loftier goals than these, it is not to reason *at all* that Peirce suggested they appeal, but rather to “instinct.” “Instinct,” by Peirce’s admission, guides the organism through life far more infallibly<sup>1436</sup> than reason ever could. As he noted:

It is only a remarkable man or a man in a remarkable situation, who, in default of any applicable rule of thumb, is forced to reason out his plans from first principles. In at least nine such cases out of every ten, he blunders seriously, even if he manages to escape complete disaster. We shall therefore be well within bounds in pronouncing Reason to be more than a thousand times as fallible as Instinct.<sup>1437</sup>

For Peirce, reason’s deployment in matters of “vital concern,” nine times out of ten actually *hinders* the individual’s successful navigation through life rather than aids it. Peirce went to great lengths to discuss and catalogue various instincts which he divided into two, general categories, “individual” and “social,” both “adaptive” to changing environmental circumstances, and both “adapted to the preservation of the stock...through preserving the individual in whom the instinct acts, and those which are social, and therefore, so far as they are adaptive, are adaptive primarily to the advantage of some other individual or individuals than the agent.”<sup>1438</sup> This, too, factors into his method of inquiry and further illuminates instinct’s relationship with reason. As he said, for example, in his critique of the *a priori* method, that it was based upon “the expression

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<sup>1436</sup> “Science is foredestined to reach the truth of every problem with as unerring an infallibility as the instincts of animals do their work,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.77.

<sup>1437</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 2.176.

<sup>1438</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 7.373.



of instinct which must be the ultimate cause of belief.”<sup>1439</sup> Important to note here is that Peirce is *critiquing* the *a priori* method in this way. In the *a priori* method, the “expression of instinct” becomes the cause of belief, in sharp contrast to the method of inquiry, and if the former guides individuals through life more *practically*, it becomes increasingly clear how distant Peirce’s pragmatism was to the charge of instrumentalism.

Indeed, Peirce was even suspicious of science’s marriage to practical concerns, further corroborating the claim that his method was neither advocating scienticism nor an abnormal veneration of scientists, for even in *science* can practioners run afoul of a certain instrumental rationality:

Even if a science be useful -- like engineering or surgery -- yet if it is useful only in an insignificant degree as those sciences are, it still has a divine spark in which its petty practicality must be forgotten and forgiven. But as soon as a proposition becomes vitally important -- then in the first place, it is sunk to the condition of a mere utensil; and in the second place, it ceases altogether to be scientific, because concerning matters of vital importance reasoning is at once an impertinence toward its subject matter and a treason against itself.<sup>1440</sup>

Peirce explicitly wanted to avoid science becoming a “mere utensil,” “instrumental,” in this sense, to the end of dealing with “vital concerns.” It is “instinct,” not “reason,” that, for Peirce, ought to guide the practical concerns of humans.

Further, based on his complementary notions of fallibilism and the long run of inquiry, precisely because inquiry does not terminate with me, with you, or with any finite number of inquirers currently alive, our faith in the attainment of Truth must be transferred from faith in just ourselves (subjectively) to an infinite community of inquirers stretching indefinitely into the future. As he said:

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<sup>1439</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.383.

<sup>1440</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.671.

Death makes the number of our risks, of our inferences, finite, and so makes their mean result uncertain. The very idea of probability and of reasoning rests on the assumption that this number is indefinitely great...it seems to me that we are driven to this, that logicity inexorably requires that our interests shall not be limited. They must not stop at our own fate, but must embrace the whole community. This community, again, must not be limited, but must extend to all races of beings with whom we can come into immediate or mediate intellectual relation. It must reach, however vaguely, beyond this geological epoch, beyond all bounds. He who would not sacrifice his own soul to save the whole world, is, as it seems to me, illogical in all his inferences, collectively. Logic is rooted in the social principle.<sup>1441</sup>

If, as Horkheimer said, instrumental (subjective) reason “concerns itself at all with ends, it takes for granted that they too are reasonable in the subjective sense, *i.e.* that they serve the subject’s interest in relation to self-preservation – be that of the single individual, or of the community on whose maintenance that of the individual depends,”<sup>1442</sup> Peirce’s pragmatism was neither subjective nor concerned with self-preservation: an issue of “instinct,” not “reason.”

Further, Horkheimer was concerned that, “the idea that an aim can be reasonable for its own sake – on the basis of virtues that insight reveals it to have in itself – without reference to some kind of subjective gain or advantage, is utterly alien to subjective reason.”<sup>1443</sup> Let us consider the following definition of what Peirce called “the true man of science,” that is, the ideal sort of philosopher:

There are two qualifications which every true man of science possesses, and which, if a man possesses them, he is sure to develop into a scientific man in the course of time, if he ought not fairly to be called such already. First, the dominant passion of his whole soul must be to find out the truth in some department, regardless of what the color of that truth may be.

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<sup>1441</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 2.654.

<sup>1442</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 3.

<sup>1443</sup> *Ibid.*

Secondly, he must have a natural gift for reasoning, for severely critical thought.<sup>1444</sup>

The goal of this ideal man of science is clearly *not* personal gain, personal advantage, nor the mere avoidance of subjective problems and disasters. Here, the goal is not personal gain but “truth,” “regardless of the color of that truth,” that is, regardless of how that truth may manifest, in what realm of inquiry it may manifest, and regardless, too, of what personal benefits can be gained through its approximation via inquiry.<sup>1445</sup> The emphasis on “severely critical thought” likewise indicates anything but submission to the indoctrinating mores of the current milieu but, quite the contrary (in keeping with his first rule of reason), the ideal man of science will be all-too-ready to critique the beliefs proliferated by the authority and seek a Truth above and beyond (perhaps, “behind”) those beliefs.

In contrast to subjective/instrumental reason, Horkheimer forwarded what he called “objective reason”:

The supreme endeavor of this kind of thinking was to reconcile the objective order of the ‘reasonable,’ as philosophy conceived it, with human existence, including self-interest and self-preservation. Plato, for instance, undertakes in his *Republic* to prove that he who lives in the light of objective reason also lives a successful and happy life.<sup>1446</sup>

Peirce made this point explicitly:

The love of truth is still far from mighty; and a gift for reasoning is still as rare a talent as a gift for music. Most men are incapable of strong control over their minds. Their thoughts are such as instinct, habit, association suggest, mainly. Their criticism of their thoughts is confined to

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<sup>1444</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.605.

<sup>1445</sup> Though it is consequently *also* true that reason ought not be deployed for beneficent, socio-political ends, which would, in this sense, move Peirce away from the general aims of critical theory as Ingram defined it above.

<sup>1446</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 4.

reconsideration and to asking themselves whether their ideas seem reasonable. I do not call this reasoning; I call it instinctive reflexion. For most purposes it is the best way to think; for instinct blunders far less than reason. Reasoners are in danger of falling into sophistry and pedantry. Our instinctive ways of thinking have become adapted to ordinary practical life, just as the rest of our physiology has become adapted to our environment. Wisdom lies in nicely discriminating the occasions for reasoning and the occasions for going by instinct. Some of my most valued friends have been almost incapable of reasoning; and yet they have been men of singularly sound judgment, penetrating and sagacious. So much more important is it, on the whole, to feel right than to reason deeply. But in science instinct can play but a secondary rôle. The reason of this is that our instincts are adapted to the continuance of the race and thus to individual life. But science has an indefinite future before it; and what it aims at is to gain the greatest possible advance in knowledge in five centuries or ten.<sup>1447</sup>

Peirce explicitly linked organism-environment adaptation, as Horkheimer said, “self-preservation,” not to *reason* but to *instinct*, as we’ve discussed.<sup>1448</sup> Reason operates in the domain of science when the goal is seeking Truth into an “indefinite future” from the perspective of the long run.

In contrast to instrumental, subjective reason that has increasingly infiltrated “Western thinking in the course of the last centuries,”<sup>1449</sup> “for a long time, a diametrically opposite view of reason was prevalent.”<sup>1450</sup> As Horkheimer said:

This view asserted the existence of reason as a force not only in the individual mind but also in the objective world – in relations among human beings and between social classes, in social institutions, and in nature and its manifestations. Great philosophical systems, such as those of Plato and Aristotle, scholasticism, and German idealism were founded on an objective theory reason.<sup>1451</sup>

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<sup>1447</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, 7.606.

<sup>1448</sup> “Having thus shown how much less vitally important reason is than instinct, I next desire to point out how exceedingly desirable, not to say indispensable, it is for the successful march of discovery in philosophy and in science generally that practical utilities, whether low or high, should be put out of sight by the investigator.” *Ibid.*, CP 1.641.

<sup>1449</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 4.

<sup>1450</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1451</sup> *Ibid.*

Horkheimer serendipitously cited, as examples of this superior deployment of reason, the great majority of traditions that created the mulligan stew of Peirce's own philosophy. That reason exists not *only* in the human mind but in nature, as well, featured in Peirce's later work. For example, Peirce noted that "it seems incontestable, therefore, that the mind of man is strongly adapted to the comprehension of the world; at least, so far as this goes, that certain conceptions, highly important for such a comprehension, naturally arise in his mind; and, without such a tendency, the mind could never have had any development at all."<sup>1452</sup> Further:

The creation of the universe, which did not take place during a certain busy week, in the year 4004 B.C., but is going on today and never will be done, is this very development of Reason. I do not see how one can have a more satisfying ideal of the admirable than the development of Reason so understood. The one thing whose admirableness is not due to an ulterior reason is Reason itself comprehended in all its fullness, so far as we can comprehend it. Under this conception, the ideal of conduct will be to execute our little function in the operation of the creation by giving a hand toward rendering the world more reasonable whenever, as the slang is, it is 'up to us' to do so.<sup>1453</sup>

The universe, like reason, is ever unfolding. "What is this Reason? In the first place, it is something that never can have been completely embodied."<sup>1454</sup> Key, too, in this passage is Peirce's admission that "the one thing whose admirableness is not due to an ulterior reason is Reason itself comprehended in all its fullness," a goal not yet achieved, but a goal in itself. And what is the ideal deployment of reason, the ideal conduct of life? It is not for subjective self-betterment, nor personal gain, nor the personal avoidance of disaster as a instrumental model might have it, but, instead, we participate in reason's unfolding "by giving a hand toward rendering the world more reasonable whenever, as

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<sup>1452</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.417.

<sup>1453</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.615.

<sup>1454</sup> *Ibid.*

the slang is, it is 'up to us' to do so." By helping the world become more reasonable, reason's ideal purpose is the approximation of Truth.<sup>1455</sup>

Peirce continued to flesh out this conception of what is admirable in itself by juxtaposing it to the pursuit of subjective pleasures and desires of instrumental reason:

Now what would the doctrine that that which is admirable in itself is a quality of feeling come to if taken in all its purity and carried to its furthest extreme -- which should be the extreme of admirableness? It would amount to saying that the one ultimately admirable object is the unrestrained gratification of a desire, regardless of what the nature of that desire may be. Now that is too shocking. It would be the doctrine that all the higher modes of consciousness with which we are acquainted in ourselves, such as love and reason, are good only so far as they subserve the lowest of all modes of consciousness. It would be the doctrine that this vast universe of Nature which we contemplate with such awe is good only to produce a certain quality of feeling. Certainly, I must be excused for not admitting that doctrine unless it be proved with the utmost evidence.<sup>1456</sup>

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<sup>1455</sup> For Peirce, reason and instinct can, and do, conflict on occasion. As Peirce said: "In the ordinary conduct of everyday affairs, men really do act from instinct; and their opinions are founded on instinct in the broad sense in which I here take that term. A small dose of reasoning is necessary to connect the instinct with the occasion: but the gist and character of their conduct is due to the instinct. It is only a remarkable man or a man in a remarkable situation, who, in default of any applicable rule of thumb, is forced to reason out his plans from first principles. In at least nine such cases out of every ten, he blunders seriously, even if he manages to escape complete disaster. We shall therefore be well within bounds in pronouncing Reason to be more than a thousand times as fallible as Instinct," *Ibid.*, CP 2.176. Nevertheless, in a curious twist, Peirce noted that the prescription to follow "instinct" rather than "Reason" in matters of vital concern is, itself, a mandate of Reason. As he noted: "Invariably follow the dictates of Instinct in preference to those of Reason when such conduct will answer your purpose: that is the prescription of Reason herself. Do not harbor any expectation that the study of logic can improve your judgment in matters of business, family, or other departments of ordinary life. Clear as it seems to me that certain dicta of my conscience are unreasonable, and though I know it may very well be wrong, yet I trust to its authority emphatically rather than to any rationalistic morality. This is the only rational course," *Ibid.* In short, Reason prescribes that we default to instinct in matters of vital concern. But this sort of life, though adequate, and certainly unavoidable even for the most rational among us, is not the ultimate *sort* or life that Peirce prescribed. Drawing upon something that sounded akin to a type of Aristotelian "eudaimonia" (that rarified form of "happiness" perhaps best translated as "flourishing"), he said: "but fortunately (I say it advisedly) man is not so happy as to be provided with a full stock of instincts to meet all occasions, and so is forced upon the adventurous business of reasoning, where the many meet shipwreck and the few find, not old-fashioned happiness, but its splendid substitute, success. When one's purpose lies in the line of novelty, invention, generalization, theory--in a word, improvement of the situation--by the side of which happiness appears a shabby old dud--instinct and the rule of thumb manifestly cease to be applicable. The best plan, then, on the whole, is to base our conduct as much as possible on Instinct, but when we do reason to reason with severely scientific logic," *Ibid.*, CP 2.178.

<sup>1456</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.614.

The only reason Peirce saw for this position “is that gratification, pleasure, is the only conceivable result that is satisfied with itself; and therefore, since we are seeking for that which is fine and admirable without any reason beyond itself, pleasure, bliss, is the only object which can satisfy the conditions.”<sup>1457</sup> However, “in these days...when these ideas of progress and growth have themselves grown up so as to occupy our minds as they now do, how can we be expected to allow the assumption to pass that the admirable in itself is any stationary result? The explanation of the circumstance that the only result that is satisfied with itself is a quality of feeling is that reason always looks forward to an endless future and expects endlessly to improve its results.”<sup>1458</sup> Evolutionary models of inquiry, thought and nature lend themselves to antiquating the notion that an end in itself can be such a “stationary” conception. In response, Peirce maintained that the goals of reason, ever future-oriented, and ever-unfolding, are more likely candidates for what is *most* admirable, not mere pleasure. This position is further corroborated when he said:

What does right reasoning consist in? It consists in such reasoning as shall be conducive to our ultimate aim. What, then, is our ultimate aim? ... if we had, for example, no other aim than the pleasure of the moment, we should fall back into the same absence of any logic that the fallacious argument would lead to. We should have no ideal of reasoning, and consequently no norm.<sup>1459</sup>

Again, Peirce decried the notion that “pleasure of the moment,” an integral part of instrumental, subjective rationality as Horkheimer defined it, could possibly be the ultimate aim of inquiry. We *do* have an ideal of reasoning, namely, “Truth” in the long run, that becomes the approximation of the ideal goal of reasoning itself.

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<sup>1457</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1458</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1459</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.611.

Just as Peirce noted that instinct, the realm of self-preservation, of pleasures and of the avoidance of pain, played a “secondary” role in science, so, too, did Horkheimer note that objective reason “never precluded subjective reason, but regarded the latter as only a partial, limited expression of a universal rationality from which criteria for all things and beings were derived.”<sup>1460</sup> Indeed, for Horkheimer, it was precisely the “objective structure, and not just man and his purposes, was to be the measuring rod for individual thoughts and action.”<sup>1461</sup> Peirce’s method, too, was objective, as I demonstrated, both in terms of the Secondness of the encountered world as well as the communally forged beliefs that comprise reality, beyond what you, I, or any finite number of inquirers might say. Peirce provided an example wherein “all the followers of science are animated by a cheerful hope that the processes of investigation, if only pushed far enough, will give one certain solution to each question to which they apply it.” Initially utilizing different methods,<sup>1462</sup> “they may at first obtain different results, but, as each perfects his method and his processes, the results are found to move steadily together toward a destined centre. So with all scientific research.” Further:

Different minds may set out with the most antagonistic views, but the progress of investigation carries them by a force outside of themselves to one and the same conclusion. This activity of thought by which we are carried, not where we wish, but to a fore-ordained goal, is like the operation of destiny. No modification of the point of view taken, no selection of other facts for study, no natural bent of mind even, can enable a man to escape the predestinate opinion. This great hope is embodied in the conception of truth and reality. The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth,

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<sup>1460</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 4.

<sup>1461</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1462</sup> “One man may investigate the velocity of light by studying the transits of Venus and the aberration of the stars; another by the oppositions of Mars and the eclipses of Jupiter’s satellites; a third by the method of Fizeau; a fourth by that of Foucault; a fifth by the motions of the curves of Lissajoux; a sixth, a seventh, an eighth, and a ninth, may follow the different methods of comparing the measures of statical and dynamical electricity,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.407.



and the object represented in this opinion is the real. That is the way I would explain reality.<sup>1463</sup>

Horkheimer echoed this language in his definition of objective reason in sharp contrast to that of instrumentalism in saying “the emphasis [is] on ends rather than on means...objective reason did not focus on the co-ordination of behavior and aim, but on concepts – however mythological they sound to us today – on the idea of the greatest good, on the problem of human destiny and on the way of realization of ultimate goals.”<sup>1464</sup> Peirce offered us all this and more: the greatest good is the attainment of Truth, an end in itself, and the “problem of human destiny” is bound up in this quest which terminates, ideally, in the attainment of said Truth, the ultimate, destined agreement.

Horkheimer associated the instrumental attitude with science itself, noting that the functions of instrumental rationality “contribute to the co-ordination of means and ends, which is, after all, the social concern of science.”<sup>1465</sup> Although Peirce readily admitted that there *are* sciences “many of whose results are almost immediately applicable to human life,” nevertheless, “the true scientific investigator completely loses sight of the utility of what he is about.”<sup>1466</sup> Further:

In philosophy, touching as it does upon matters which are, and ought to be, sacred to us, the investigator who does not stand aloof from all intent to make practical applications will not only obstruct the advance of the pure science, but, what is infinitely worse, he will endanger his own moral integrity and that of his readers.<sup>1467</sup>

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<sup>1463</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.402.

<sup>1464</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 4.

<sup>1465</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>1466</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.619.

<sup>1467</sup> *Ibid.*

Science seeks Truth, not utility, though no doubt vast utility may come from scientific endeavors.<sup>1468</sup> Indeed, Peirce made not “the slightest promise” that he had “any philosophical wares to offer you which will make you...more successful men.”<sup>1469</sup> Further, there is nothing “subjective” about reason, as Horkheimer noted, in instrumental reason, “the subject alone can genuinely have reason.”<sup>1470</sup> As Peirce cautioned, as well, “in the conduct of life, we have to distinguish everyday affairs and great crises. In the great decisions, I do not believe it is safe to trust to individual reason. In everyday business, reasoning is tolerably successful; but I am inclined to think that it is done as well without the aid of theory as with it.”<sup>1471</sup> In the “vital crises,” the everyday affairs to which instrumental reason is directed, the construction of means to achieve prescribed ends, “reason, for all the frills it customarily wears...comes down upon its marrow-bones to beg the succour of instinct.”<sup>1472</sup> Further, “if I allow the supremacy of sentiment in human affairs, I do so at the dictation of reason itself; and equally at the dictation of sentiment, in theoretical matters I refuse to allow sentiment any weight whatever.”<sup>1473</sup>

For Horkheimer, the problem problem was that:

If the subjectivist view holds true, thinking cannot be of any help in determining the desirability of any goal in itself. The acceptability of ideals, the criteria for our actions and beliefs, the leading principles of ethics and politics, all our ultimate decisions are made to depend upon factors other than reason.<sup>1474</sup>

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<sup>1468</sup> Between “Truth” and “utility” there appears to arise the sort of dualism that Peirce (and the other pragmatists, as well) attempted to eschew. A charitable reading, one still faithful to the essence of Peirce’s thoughts here, might be to bring the discussion back to instrumentalism: so long as “utility” is not the *end* or *goal* of inquiry (this is the rightful place of “Truth”), but merely the byproduct of inquiry, no profound tension between “Truth” and “utility” need arise.

<sup>1469</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.621.

<sup>1470</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 4.

<sup>1471</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.623.

<sup>1472</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.630.

<sup>1473</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.634.

<sup>1474</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 6.

All thought becomes little more than “matters of choice and predilection” and it has become “meaningless to speak of truth.”<sup>1475</sup> The latter, it goes without saying, clearly does not apply to Peirce and the former rings of Peirce’s critique of the *a priori* method of belief formation, where “the action of natural preference” is left “unimpeded”, resting on no “observed facts,” but “adopted” only because “their fundamental propositions seemed ‘agreeable to reason.’”<sup>1476</sup>

Just as Horkheimer lamented that the rising tide of instrumentalism would come to dominate the age, Peirce, too, voiced a similar concern:

The nineteenth century is now fast sinking into the grave, and we all begin to review its doings and to think what character it is destined to bear as compared with other centuries in the minds of future historians. It will be called, I guess, the Economical Century; for political economy has more direct relations with all the branches of its activity than has any other science. Well, political economy has its formula of redemption, too. It is this: Intelligence in the service of greed ensures the justest prices, the fairest contracts, the most enlightened conduct of all the dealings between men, and leads to the *summum bonum*, food in plenty and perfect comfort. Food for whom? Why, for the greedy master of intelligence....until there has resulted a philosophy which comes unwittingly to this, that greed is the great agent in the elevation of the human race and in the evolution of the universe.<sup>1477</sup>

Peirce leveled a stunning critique of the growing commodification of philosophy and its submission to capitalistic instrumentalism. Indeed, Peirce’s critique was not altogether dissimilar from the critique leveled *at* pragmatism by its critics.

Further, as I’ve indicated throughout, Peirce faced this rising ride of instrumentalism personally and professionally at every turn, handicapping his otherwise

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<sup>1475</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1476</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1477</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.290.

revolutionary scientific discoveries. As he noted on one occasion, for example, in a letter to Mendenhall:

I feel impelled to say that one or two things you said to me...appear to me quite wrong. You mentioned as almost culpable that every head of a bureau wants to set up an investigating laboratory of the brance of science which concerns him. The idea is, I suppose, that he mustn't try to do his work scientifically, because that might cost money...that view seems to me in the first place to overlook the facts of human nature. If you pay a man a very low salary to begin with, and then forbid him to have any warmth or zeal in the conduct of his office, carefully remove all intellectual interest it might have and leave him nothing but the pure money to work for, and finally construct a series of fiscal regulations the main purpose of which seems to be to take up as much time with accounts as possible, - if you do all that you will have the heads of bureaus even worse than they are now. In the second place, it rather shocks me to hear *you* who know what a slough of materialism this country has sunk in, where nothing is considered as sacred except the holy, holy, holy dollar, - giving in to complaints against heads of bureaus that they are spending a little money in trying to advance science...<sup>1478</sup>

Nevertheless, Horkheimer insisted that pragmatism was the prime culprit of this new form of instrumental rationality, specifically in “its surrender to heteronymous contents”<sup>1479</sup> in juxtaposition with the “autonomy”<sup>1480</sup> of objective reason, precisely the sort of instrumentalism that Peirce decried in this letter and battled against every step of his professional career. Pragmatism, which Horkheimer viewed as a co-conspirator along with positivism in this regard, was guilty of allowing reason to be “completely harnessed to the social process,”<sup>1481</sup> stripped of all objective content. That Peirce would adamantly reject that reason should be completely harnessed to the social process was patently clear through his critique of the method of authority, not to mention Peirce’s insistence that

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<sup>1478</sup> Draft letter from Peirce to Thomas Corwin Mendenhall, November 18, 1891. Cited in Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 196.

<sup>1479</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 14.

<sup>1480</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>1481</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

philosophy ought not be subjugated to practical, “vital” concerns that would result in the altering or influencing of inquiry’s trajectory. Inquiry *must*, he insisted, “be determined by nothing human, but by some external permanency -- by something upon which our thinking has no effect.”<sup>1482</sup> This “external permanency would not be external, in our sense, if it was restricted in its influence to one individual. It must be something which affects, or might affect, every man.”<sup>1483</sup> To subjugate reason’s role in inquiry to anything but Truth would be to effectively *block* the ongoing path of inquiry, the worst of all intellectual sins for Peirce. By rejecting the position that the goals of inquiry be created by anything “human” (instrumentalism), this clearly includes rejecting also any social processes forged of human desires, specifically, the beliefs foisted upon inquirers within a method of authority. If philosophy was put in thrall to socio-political concerns, those concerns would dictate inquiry’s trajectory, and then we could, indeed, claim that reason had become instrumental, namely, a means of validating the pre-existing goals and claims of a given society. This was precisely the heart of Peirce’s critique of the method of authority and Peirce’s “suspicion” of allowing reason to be harnessed by socio-political concerns was that the trajectory of inquiry would be dictated by pre-ordained ends conducive to the perpetuation of the authority’s power, the very essence of instrumental deployment of reason:

To declare that the sole reason for scientific research is the good of society is to encourage those pseudo-scientists to claim, and the general public to admit, that they, who deal with the applications of knowledge, are the true men of science, and that the theoreticians are little better than idlers.<sup>1484</sup>

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<sup>1482</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.384.

<sup>1483</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1484</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 8.142.

If we read this through the lens of “technical rationality,” the “good of society” is represented by the indoctrinating mores that lead to integration into a milieu of efficiency, productivity, and commodity capitalism. These are “good,” at least, from the perspective of the invested interests. “Truth is truth,” after all, “whether it is opposed to the interests of society to admit it or not.”<sup>1485</sup>

As Anderson notes, “the political situation, as Peirce saw it, is that the subservience of philosophy-science to social needs is yet another, more subtle, form of authority.”<sup>1486</sup> As Gallie notes, “if once science is directed to fixing belief in subservience to the interim needs of practice, it thereby ceases to be genuine science.”<sup>1487</sup> As Peirce himself said, “we are told that we must not believe a certain purely theoretical proposition because it is ‘anti-social’ to do so, and because to do so ‘is opposed to the interests of society.’”<sup>1488</sup> But this is precisely the sort of commitment to negative thinking that the Frankfurt School championed: if the interests of society are totalitarian, Peirce was advocating the true individual of science *ignore* those purported “interests of society” and stay the course towards Truth. As Peirce said:

I stand for, have always stood for the very freest of free-thinking. If there is anyone who goes beyond me in reprobation of all attempts and any attempt to stifle or discourage free-thought or its proper expression all I can say is that I have never yet met such a person.<sup>1489</sup>

Thus, I argue, in no way did Peirce advocate the harnessing of reason by social processes.

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<sup>1485</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 8.143.

<sup>1486</sup> Anderson, “A Political Dimension of Fixing Belief,” *Op. Cit.*, 231.

<sup>1487</sup> W. B. Gallie, *Peirce and Pragmatism* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1952), 89.

<sup>1488</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.143.

<sup>1489</sup> Charles S. Peirce in Richard Robin, *Annotated Catalogue of the Papers of Charles S. Peirce* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967), L387b.

Horkheimer continued his critique of pragmatism in saying that reason's "operational value, its role in the domination of men and nature, has been made the sole criterion."<sup>1490</sup> In terms of the latter, Peirce framed the method of inquiry as the transactions between an organism and its environment. For example, he said, "doubt, usually, perhaps always, takes its rise from surprise, which supposes previous belief; and surprises come with novel environment."<sup>1491</sup> But there is no implication in the transactional model of inquiry that "domination" or "subjugation" of nature has any place in Peirce's model.

Consider, for example, the juxtaposition between the methods of inquiry and tenacity. Tenacity entailed the purposive self-isolating of the individual to prevent the exposure to alternative beliefs that did not corroborate the individual's own. Burning the newspaper that advocates alternative perspectives has the same result as not reading it. Taking a hammer to the television that expresses alternate opinions has the same result as turning it off. In sum, destroying the immediate or proximate *source* of the problem is not the same as *engaging* the problem itself. As Peirce said, "here is the operation of the environment, which goes to break up habits destined to be broken up and so to render the mind lively."<sup>1492</sup> The state of belief is type of *equilibrium* with the environment, not the *domination* of it. And the ideal reaction to *disequilibrium*, a state of doubt, is not the destruction of the object of tension, but its understanding, integration, and assimilation into a new, stronger belief. As De Waal says, "inquiry...is a mechanism by which certain organisms adapt themselves to concrete changes in their environment so as to regain their

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<sup>1490</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 15.

<sup>1491</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.512.

<sup>1492</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.301.

homeostatic equilibrium.”<sup>1493</sup> Adaptation does not entail destruction. Quite the opposite, in fact, since the destruction of the environment would, in the long run, necessarily result in the destruction of the organism itself.<sup>1494</sup> Indeed, Peirce even took a quick, sly stab at capitalism as framed in this way, noting, “here, then, would be a continual increase of wealth, which is a sort of ‘adaptation to one’s environment,’ produced by a survival of the fittest, that is, by the elimination from the game of every player who has lost his last dollar.”<sup>1495</sup> Although undeniably science *has* been used to destroy the environment, this is not the form of science’s deployment that Peirce advocated.

In terms of using reason instrumentally to dominate *man*, I find no substantive indication of this in Peirce. Between his critique of authority, his critique of capitalism<sup>1496</sup> as the “Gospel of Greed,” his insistence on a democratic form of inquiry, I feel such a charge is easily refuted. Although it could be argued that the creation of an ideal

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<sup>1493</sup> De Waal, *On Pragmatism, Op. Cit.*, 2. As De Waal frames it here (and he’s not wrong to do so), this begins to sound more like the goal of inquiry is something akin to “utility” rather than “Truth.” However, for Peirce, “Truth” was beyond any doubt (apodictic, in this sense) such that no problems could, or *would*, ever arise to disturb it, forcing reevaluation in the future. Inquiry necessarily takes place through transactions between organisms and their environments (environments which include other organisms). Thus, if the problems that “Truth” would no longer encounter would have otherwise been the product of these transactions, it follows that “Truth” is a *type* of ultimate equilibrium between an organism and its environment where no disruption (disequilibrium) would ever re-emerge. In short, I contend that there is the type of equilibrium of utility that does not necessarily entail the approximation of Truth (perhaps driven by “instinct” on matters of vital concern) but, also, there is the type of equilibrium in this more rarified sense which *is* the approximation of Truth and *does* entail the former conception, as well: Truth would satisfy both the rational *as well as* the instinctual quest for equilibrium whereas the instinctual quest for equilibrium does not necessarily need to entail the rational.

<sup>1494</sup> As Peirce said, “there remains little doubt that the Darwinian theory indicates a real cause, which tends to adapt animal and vegetable forms to their environment,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.395.

<sup>1495</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.396.

<sup>1496</sup> Intriguingly, even the Metaphysical Club subtly demonstrates Peirce’s disgust with capitalistic tendencies influencing the trajectory of inquiry. It demonstrates a good microcosm example of his method of inquiry and the ways in which “business” can interfere with the communal procession towards Truth. As he notes of the “constitution” of the Metaphysical Club, “it simply consisted in a single clause forbidding any action ever being taken by the Club as a collective body, thus preventing it from wasting the only intrinsically precious element in the world, as so many other societies waste it, in the idle frivolity they call ‘business,’ while moreover since without action there could be no debate, to gentlemen desirous of distinguishing themselves or of taking out patents as it were upon such ingenious combinations of ideas as they might contrive, an adequate motive was presented to hold their peace and abandon the arena of debate to those who only sought to draw as near the truth as they could,” manuscript 317, cited in Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life, Op. Cit.*, 84.



community of inquirers is merely an *individual's* means to achieving the end of Truth for him or herself, this strikes me a very odd reading, indeed, and one that is hard to justify in light of Peirce's entire body of work.

Horkheimer continued his critique by charging pragmatism with encouraging "concepts" to become nothing more than "'streamlined,' rationalized, labor-saving devices. It is if thinking itself had been reduced to the level of industrial processes, subjected to a close schedule – in short, made part and parcel of production."<sup>1497</sup> Peirce's deployment of reason for inquiry and his quest for Truth had, by my estimation, nothing whatsoever to do with "production" in the sense of commodity and capital, as indicated by his critique of scientists motivated solely by money.<sup>1498</sup> Further, I argue that there is no "close schedule" (one that Horkheimer rightly associates with the ongoing means of production and commodity consumption) that Peirce adhered to, indeed, far from it. As Gallie notes, "the ends and standards of scientific inquiry cannot be equated with those of practice – whether conceived in terms of immediate economic utility, personal well-being, or social cohesion"<sup>1499</sup> for "inquiry can only fulfill its proper function, the settlement of belief, if it abjures all thought of an immediate or temporarily useful settlement."<sup>1500</sup> As Thompson notes, "the final aim of each inquirer is never the verification of this or that hypothesis but rather the truth which is pursued by the *unlimited* community"<sup>1501</sup> in the *long run*. If the goal of Peirce's method of inquiry were somehow commodified by capitalism, the invested interests would fail to meet their

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<sup>1497</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 15.

<sup>1498</sup> "The worst feature of the present state of things is that the great majority of the members of many scientific societies, and a large part of others, are men whose chief interest in science is as a means of gaining money, and who have a contempt, or half-contempt, for pure science," Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, 8.142.

<sup>1499</sup> Gallie, *Peirce and Pragmatism*, *Op. Cit.*, 89.

<sup>1500</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1501</sup> Manley Thompson. *The Pragmatic Philosophy of C.S. Peirce* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), 143. My italics.

deadlines, I dare suspect, and, considering the ideal (i.e., perpetual) nature of the goal, itself, these invested interests would find themselves out of business long before they could package and ship the product of Peirce's philosophy.

According to Horkheimer, pragmatism maintained that:

No aim as such is better than another. Modern thought has tried to make a philosophy out of this view, as represented in pragmatism. The core of this philosophy is the opinion that an idea, a concept, or a theory is nothing but a scheme or plan of action, and therefore truth is nothing but the successfulness of the idea.<sup>1502</sup>

The first part of Horkheimer's critique here is a charge that pragmatism did not create *values*, and thus "no aim...is better than another." However, Peirce made an exhaustive study of what he called "normative science" as one of the "three grand divisions"<sup>1503</sup> of philosophy, that which "investigates the universal and necessary laws of the relation of Phenomena to *Ends*, that is...to Truth, Right, and Beauty."<sup>1504</sup> Peirce then subdivided "normative science" into "esthetics, ethics, and logic"<sup>1505</sup> wherein "esthetics considers those things whose ends are to embody qualities of feeling, ethics those things whose ends lie in action, and logic those things whose end is to represent something,"<sup>1506</sup> all of which was central to his pragmatism.

Further, as I've demonstrated above, both in terms of James' refutation that the purpose of philosophy terminates in action and Peirce's explicit claim that "pure science has nothing at all to do with *action*,"<sup>1507</sup> it is, I argue, patently clear that Horkheimer's condemnation of pragmatism as a philosophy that reduces all theory to "nothing but a

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<sup>1502</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 28 – 29.

<sup>1503</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.121.

<sup>1504</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1505</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.129.

<sup>1506</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1507</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.635.

scheme” has nothing at all to do with Peirce. It is true, of course, as Mullin notes, for Peirce, “we call a belief true if the action that it produces leads us to what we expect in reality.”<sup>1508</sup> That a belief’s veracity is actively tested to determine if the guiding principles *of* that belief do indeed lead to the conclusions the inquirer expects, is no more, nor less, than a fundamental *aspect* of the scientific method itself, one which Peirce never privileged at the expense of the belief, the doubt, the inquiry, the resolution, Truth that lies in wait, Reality that may be found, or any other part of the cyclical process of belief formation. Beliefs *shape* actions, actions that engage with the environment through testing and inquiry, and produce new beliefs. Beliefs establish “in our nature...a rule of action, or, say for short, a *habit*. As it appeases the irritation of doubt, which is the motive for thinking, thought relaxes, and comes to rest for a moment when belief is reached.”<sup>1509</sup> And on the cycle goes. The habit (that denotes a *rule* for action not the action itself, it is important to add) is established by the belief and allows thought to relax, temporarily, until a new problem disrupts the initial belief and demands a reformulation. As I’ve argued before, there is no reason to privilege action over belief in Peirce, especially in light of the ideal, ultimate goal of inquiry that was meant to secure the veracity of “true beliefs” (not actions).

However, Horkheimer may well have been right to raise, at least, a worried eyebrow if he’s aiming this part of the critique at *James*, rather than Peirce. As Philström notes:

In Peirce’s view, this doctrine, assuming that ‘the end of man is action,’ pushes the pragmatic method ‘to such extremes as much tend to give us

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<sup>1508</sup> Richard Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 123.

<sup>1509</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.397.

pause' (CP 5.3, 1902). James' pragmatism is 'extreme,' implying that 'Doing is the ultimate purpose of life' (CP 8.115, c. 1900).<sup>1510</sup>

I've noted this before, but it bears repetition here in light of Horkheimer's direct criticism. In a letter to James, Peirce wrote:

That everything is to be tested by its practical results was the great text of my early papers; so, as far as I get your general aim...I am quite with you in the main. In my later papers, I have seen more thoroughly than I used to do that it is not mere action as brute exercise of strength that is the purpose of all, but say generalization, such action as tends towards regularization, and the actualization of the thought which without actions remains unthought.<sup>1511</sup>

Though to some degree James may have been guilty of Horkheimer's charge, Peirce maintained, "the end of thought is action only in so far as the end of action is another thought."<sup>1512</sup> The elevation of "action" as the sole reason for inquiry obfuscates the general trajectory of his method of inquiry.

For Horkheimer:

If it were not for the founder of the school, Charles S. Peirce, who has told us that he 'learned philosophy out of Kant,' one might be tempted to deny any philosophical pedigree to a doctrine that holds not that our expectations are fulfilled and our actions successful because our ideas are true, but rather that our ideas are true because our expectations are fulfilled and our actions successful. Indeed, it would be doing Kant an injustice to make him responsible for this development. He made scientific insight dependent upon transcendental, not upon empirical functions. He did not liquidate truth by identifying it with the practical actions of verification, nor by teaching that meaning and effect are identical.<sup>1513</sup>

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<sup>1510</sup> Sami Philström, "Peirce's Place in the Pragmatist Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce*, ed. Cheryl Misak (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 32.

<sup>1511</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.250.

<sup>1512</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.272.

<sup>1513</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 29.

Horkheimer claimed, for Peirce, that ideas are considered “true” only to the extent that our actions are successful rather than, as I argue was Peirce’s intent, that our actions are successful precisely *because* our beliefs are true. Horkheimer effectively *reversed* Peirce’s justification for the creation of “true beliefs.” Although it’s true, for Peirce, that we may claim that we have a “true belief” *if* our expectations are fulfilled and our actions successful, this is not what *makes* it true. A belief’s veracity is “determined by nothing human, but by some external permanency -- by something upon which our thinking has no effect.”<sup>1514</sup> Further, there was an implicit sense of ultimate termination in Horkheimer’s claim that, for pragmatists, “our ideas are true because our experiences are fulfilled and our actions successful” as if this were the end of the story whereas, for Peirce, it’s just a *moment* of inquiry’s unfolding. This misreading of Peirce is further corroborated in Horkheimer’s accusation that pragmatism liquidated “truth by identifying it with the practical actions of verification,” in keeping with the methods of positivism, in general. For Peirce, Truth can never be liquidated nor, really, can it ever be exhausted.

Further, as Horkheimer said, “pragmatism reflects a society that has no time to remember and meditate.”<sup>1515</sup> Aside from the fact that Peirce discussed “memory” at length throughout his vast corpus, granting it a significant role, a reality, and a “power”<sup>1516</sup> that contributed to the present as well as the future, Peirce’s critique, for example, of the method of authority was riddled with examples culled from history’s past to demonstrate the real terror and real efficacy of this method of belief formation.

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<sup>1514</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.384. This “external permanency” would be that objective factor in inquiry, namely, that externality of Secondness that I discussed previously that, though experienced phenomenologically, resists our beliefs if they are less than “true” in the provisional sense. That is, for Peirce, we cannot simply believe whatever we wish, as if resolutely believing that fire will not burn us, for it will, a fact of the matter that cannot be circumvented no matter how much we may wish it.

<sup>1515</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1516</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 7.667.

Horkheimer's critique also implicitly accused pragmatism of sacrificing reflection for expediency, that society "has no time" for such matters and requires *instant* gratification. But of course, considering Peirce's "long run," whatever "instant" gratification we may receive from the deployment of the method of inquiry is provisional at best.

Horkheimer continued his critique, emphasizing the "subjectivism of the school" that highlights "the role that 'our' practices, actions, and interests play in its theory of knowledge, not in its acceptance of a phenomenalist doctrine. If true judgments on objects, and therewith the concept of the object itself, rest solely on 'effects' upon the subject's action, it is hard to understand what meaning could still be attributed to the concept 'object.'"<sup>1517</sup> Aside from the fact that Horkheimer failed to appreciate the central role phenomenology (phaneroscopy) played in Peirce's pragmatism (or didn't read it), if he was claiming that human practices, actions, and interests *constitute* all that there is about an object, this view contradicts Peirce's insistence on an *objective* component of inquiry. As Peirce said, objects "are what they are, and persist at every opportunity in revealing themselves regardless of what you or I, or any man or any generation of men, may think that they are."<sup>1518</sup> The fundamental hypothesis of Peirce's scientific method of inquiry was this:

There are Real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them; those Reals affect our senses according to regular laws, and, though our sensations are as different as are our relations to the object, yet, by taking advantage of the laws of perception, we can ascertain by reasoning how things really and truly are.<sup>1519</sup>

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<sup>1517</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 31.

<sup>1518</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.144.

<sup>1519</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.384. Others, like Rorty, would challenge this assumption, and rightly so. Nevertheless, this rarefied form of "realism," as I've discussed, is central to Peirce's method of inquiry, both in terms of his cosmological ruminations on the increasing regularity of natural laws (paralleling the increasing regularity of guiding principles for inquirers engaged in the scientific method) as well as harkening back to that "external permanency" of Secondness. Peirce did himself no favors in phrasing it this way, however, for

Horkheimer eventually cited Peirce directly, a citation that culminated in Peirce's contention that not only ought philosophy adopt the scientific method but, too, that pragmatism operates by the "logical rule – 'By their fruits ye shall know them.'"<sup>1520</sup> It is curious to note that Horkheimer harvested this quote from a section in which Peirce was explicitly distancing himself from the rest of the tradition for many of the reasons we have hitherto explored.<sup>1521</sup> Setting aside, for a moment, the issue of divergences between James, Dewey, and Peirce, let us look at the citation itself: "By their fruits ye shall know them." By Horkheimer's own admission, he sought a theory that, in his words, would be "that our expectations are fulfilled and our actions successful because our ideas are true." This is quite right. "By their fruits ye shall know them." By the fulfillment of our expectations, by the success of our actions, by the correlations achieved between beliefs as guiding principles with the results we expect we have good evidence to suggest that, albeit provisionally, our ideas (prior *to* the actions that tested them) are true. The "fruits" are the successes of inquiry. The "them" is the Truth. Which, by my estimation, is precisely the formulation Horkheimer was seeking, himself. As Brent notes, for Peirce, meaning was not exhausted in a mere empirical act of observation of traits or effects but rather "meaning is the result of what physicists call a thought experiment; it is the consequences of the testing of a hypothesis by way of its conceivable results. Meaning is

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the "Real," properly understood in Peirce's phenomenology, would be more akin to "Thirdness," as I have argued, which is not the same as the "tension" of encountered externality in "Secondness."

<sup>1520</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 32.

<sup>1521</sup> "The most prominent of all our school and the most respected, William James, defines pragmatism as the doctrine that the whole "meaning" of a concept expresses itself either in the shape of conduct to be recommended or of experience to be expected. Between this definition and mine there certainly appears to be no slight theoretical divergence, which, for the most part, becomes evanescent in practice...we may differ on important questions of philosophy -- especially as regards the infinite and the absolute," Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.466.

virtual, not actual.”<sup>1522</sup> Meaning was never exhausted, for Peirce, nor could it be fully encapsulated by a simple dictum or singular experiment. It was an ongoing process of determination, ever only approximate, always relatively indistinct, and ever future-oriented: meaning *is* the result of the testing of hypotheses and, as we’ve seen, tests that reach far beyond the cold confines of the sterile laboratory but into all walks of human inquiry including the realm of the socio-political and “though experiments,” hypotheses, are precisely what an authoritarian power structure would seek to diminish (or influence) for fear of the results undermining the beliefs they have proliferated. As Peirce said, “the best that can be done is to supply a hypothesis, not devoid of all likelihood, in the general line of growth of scientific ideas, and capable of being verified or refuted by future observers.”<sup>1523</sup>

In direct contrast to a reduction of thought to mere “cash value,” Peirce, in his critique of Ernest Mach, a renowned instrumentalist, noted:

It is Prof. Ernst Mach who has done the most to show the importance in logic of the consideration of Economy although I had written a paper on the subject as early as 1878. But Mach goes altogether too far. For he allows thought no other value than that of economizing experiences. This cannot for an instant be admitted.<sup>1524</sup>

Further, Peirce’s philosophy not only entailed the achieved objective of inquiry (Truth and Reality), but the ideal forum for that objective’s achievement. The unlimited community *itself* became an ideal implicit in Peirce’s method of inquiry: if he believed that Truth and Reality *could*, ideally, be known, and if Truth and Reality can only be known by an unlimited community of inquirers, it follows that Peirce also maintained the

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<sup>1522</sup> Brent, *Charles S. Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 12.

<sup>1523</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.4.

<sup>1524</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 5.601.



possibility of, and desire for, a most robust form of solidarity and community. As Megill notes in his comparison of Marxism and Pragmatism, Peirce accepted a “radical” form of reason, one that “involves the assertion that there is a reality independent of human consciousness” which “requires asserting that man lives in community.”<sup>1525</sup> As Peirce said:

The question whether the *genus homo* has any existence except as individuals, is the question whether there is anything of any more dignity, worth, and importance than individual happiness, individual aspirations, and individual life. Whether men really have anything in common, so that the *community* is to be considered as an end in itself is the most fundamental practical question in regard to every public institution, the constitution of which we have it in our power to influence.<sup>1526</sup>

Individual, *subjective* “happiness” and “aspirations” are nothing compared to the happiness and aspirations of the *community*. Far from submitting to the subjectivist charge, the community is far more important than the individual.

With Peirce’s ideal community in mind, in conjunction with his assertion that the individual is but a “cell” in a greater social organism and only through inquiry and solidarity does the individual dissolve the antagonisms that displaced him or her in the first place, let us consider this passage from the early Marx:

Human emancipation will only be complete when the real, individual man has absorbed into himself the abstract citizen; when as an individual man, in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become a *species being* and when he has recognized and organized his own powers as *social* powers so that he no longer separates the social power from himself as *political power*.<sup>1527</sup>

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<sup>1525</sup> Kenneth A. Megill, “Peirce and Marx,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1967): 55 – 65, 56.

<sup>1526</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.38.

<sup>1527</sup> Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, trans. and ed. by T.B. Bottomore (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 31.

If we juxtapose Marx's desire to see the individual man who has "recognized and organized his own powers as *social* powers" with Peirce's claim that "no man can be logical whose supreme desire is [limited to] the well-being of himself,"<sup>1528</sup> we begin to see the profound resonance and Peirce's extreme distance from any accusation of subjectivism. Interesting to note, too, that Horkheimer was critical of this conception of man becoming a "species being" when he said that, in the modern milieu, men have become "mere species beings, exactly like one another through isolation in the forcibly united collectivity. The oarsmen, who cannot speak to one another, are each of them yoked in the same rhythm as the modern worker in the factory, movie theater, and collective."<sup>1529</sup> The distinction between Marx's positive reading of species being, and Horkheimer's negative reading, may be equated to the "community" under the rule of authority and the "community" under the method of inquiry in Peirce. As we've explored, there *is* solidarity and "community" under the method of authority, but it is forged of force, coercion, indoctrination, violence and fear. An *ideal* community would be entirely uncoerced, radically democratic, and brought together by a common goal of their *own* making (again, parallels may also be drawn between Sartre's distinction of "seriality" and a "group-in-fusion," respectively).

"Pragmatism," Horkheimer claimed, is "trying to turn experimental physics into a prototype of all science."<sup>1530</sup> But Peirce did *not* privilege the bare facts of physics over the theories, themselves. As he said, "in all the explanatory sciences theories far more simple than the real facts are of the utmost service in enabling us to analyse the phenomena, and it may truly be said that physics could not possibly deal even with its

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<sup>1528</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 2.661.

<sup>1529</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Op. Cit.*, 55.

<sup>1530</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 35.

relatively simple facts without such analytic procedure.”<sup>1531</sup> Further, Peirce was explicit in noting “the dependence of physics upon philosophy,”<sup>1532</sup> not the other way around.

Further still, in his analysis of physics, there is this often overlooked passage:

The old-fashioned political economist adored, as alone capable of redeeming the human race, the glorious principle of individual greed, although, as this principle requires for its action hypocrisy and fraud, he generally threw in some dash of inconsistent concessions to virtue, as a sop to the vulgar Cerberus. But it is easy to see that the only kind of science this principle would favor would be such as is immediately remunerative with a great preference for such as can be kept secret, like the modern sciences of dyeing and perfumery. Kepler's discovery rendered Newton possible, and Newton rendered modern physics possible, with the steam engine, electricity, and all the other sources of the stupendous fortunes of our age. But Kepler's discovery would not have been possible without the doctrine of conics. Now contemporaries of Kepler -- such penetrating minds as Descartes and Pascal -- were abandoning the study of geometry (in which they included what we now call the differential calculus, so far as that had at that time any existence) because they said it was so UTTERLY USELESS. There was the future of the human race almost trembling in the balance; for had not the geometry of conic sections already been worked out in large measure, and had their opinion that only sciences apparently useful ought to be pursued, [prevailed] the nineteenth century would have had none of those characters which distinguish it from the *ancien régime*.<sup>1533</sup>

Peirce was *rescuing* the “otherwise useless” from obscurity precisely by advocating inquiry for inquiry’s sake not reducible to the “utility” determined in a culture of capital and greed. Peirce was not contributing to a culture of expediency, capital, and commodity, as Horkheimer maintained, but railing *against* any milieu deeming some avenue of inquiry “useless” if it failed to address “immediate” concerns.

At the end of his critique, Horkheimer concluded that Peirce, and his fellow pragmatists, were quite “unable to deal with the cultural debacle of our days.”<sup>1534</sup> As he

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<sup>1531</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.96.

<sup>1532</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.249.

<sup>1533</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.75.

<sup>1534</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 35.

said, “the fathers of pragmatism made the satisfaction of the subject the criterion of truth.”<sup>1535</sup> Such a conception would result in a thoroughgoing “rugged” or “atomic” individualism, inherent in capitalistic competitiveness, selfishness, personal greed, and the dissolution of authentic solidarity. Quite the contrary, Peirce was adamantly opposed to such a conception of atomic individualism. As Mullin observes:

Political democracy and the system of capitalism and private ownership developed on the assumption that the individual first subsists, and then enters into arrangements with other individuals for their mutual benefit. The preeminence that each of us bestows on our separate selves bolsters the belief in the reality of separate individuals. Each of us seems to be self-contained and self-centered, and our cooperation and communication take place among ready-made selves.<sup>1536</sup>

Peirce, as we’ve seen, was the *hyperbolic* inverse of this conception: a theory of an unlimited postulated community and an original “social individualism” more primal than our subjective individuation. As Peirce said, “a person is not absolutely an individual...the man’s circle of society (however widely or narrowly this phrase may be understood), is a sort of loosely compacted person, in some respects of higher rank than the person of an individual organism.”<sup>1537</sup> In sharp contrast to this, as we’ve seen, lies “the conviction of the nineteenth century,” the milieu of capital and commodity and competition under the “illusion” of atomic individualism, extreme subjectivism, the idea that “progress takes place by virtue of every individual’s striving for himself with all his might and trampling his neighbour under foot whenever he gets a chance to do so. This may accurately be called the Gospel of Greed.”<sup>1538</sup> In articulating a method of inquiry that demands hyperbolic freedom, in noting that method can flourish *only* in a

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<sup>1535</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>1536</sup> Mullin, *The Soul of Classical American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 127.

<sup>1537</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.421.

<sup>1538</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 6.294.

hyperbolically inclusive socio-political democracy, and in sticking to his first rule of reason that seeks to dissolve *any* blockade of inquiry, Peirce's quest for freedom to inquire *became* a quest to deal with, as Horkheimer felt pragmatism could not, "the cultural debacle of our days."<sup>1539</sup> How many of the horrors of capitalism and commodity fetishism, as Horkheimer and Marcuse articulated them, would tumble down if Peirce's first rule of reason was applied across the board? *Every* obstacle of inquiry, most especially instrumentalism itself, would be razed to the ground to allow not only inquiry to flourish but, in allowing inquiry to flourish, so, too, create a milieu in which inquiry *could* flourish, that is, a hyperbolically inclusive, radically free community.<sup>1540</sup>

Horkheimer claimed that Peirce's philosophy "reflects with an almost disarming candor the spirit of the prevailing business culture."<sup>1541</sup> Unless Horkheimer meant that "the spirit of the prevailing business culture" was a profoundly negative critique *of* the prevailing business culture, I cannot see how Horkheimer is anything other than completely mistaken in this accusation. As Brent notes, Peirce died just prior to the First World War, the "end of an age whose dominant values he despised."<sup>1542</sup> As Anderson rightly notes, Peirce's critique of the "Gospel of Greed" clearly demonstrates that Peirce "was not an advocate of what seem to many to be the worst demons of American capitalism."<sup>1543</sup> This is ubiquitous and clearly apparent throughout Peirce's vast corpus,

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<sup>1539</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 35.

<sup>1540</sup> The emphasis here on the "radically" free is important for, as Peirce noted, even in the method of authority, there *are* certain freedoms, specifically, just enough freedom to placate a populace into the belief that they *are* free, though only the most important topics (those integral to the perpetuation of the authority's hold on power) can be attended to.

<sup>1541</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 36.

<sup>1542</sup> Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 1.

<sup>1543</sup> Anderson, "A Political Dimension of Fixing Belief," *Op. Cit.*, 223.

this critique of instrumentalism and this critique of the “greedy master of intelligence.”<sup>1544</sup>

Peirce’s critique of the deployment of intelligence under the aegis of capital and commodity resonates with Marcuse’s position on technology, in general. For Marcuse, technology was the means of combating both poverty and scarcity but had been manipulated by invested interests in the advanced industrial society to further alienate and disenfranchise all but the upper echelon of the modern milieu, resulting in an indoctrinating performance principle, surplus repression and, as I have added, surplus scarcity (namely, that there is more scarcity than there needs to be precisely because, as Peirce argued, the food and comfort afforded by capital serves only the “greedy master” that deploys this intelligence, indicative of the type of “performance principle” Marcuse critiqued in *Eros and Civilization*). Further, as Peirce said:

What I say, then, is that the great attention paid to economical questions during our century has induced an exaggeration of the beneficial effects of greed and of the unfortunate results of sentiment, until there has resulted a philosophy which comes unwittingly to this, that greed is the great agent in the elevation of the human race and in the evolution of the universe.<sup>1545</sup>

In a brief analysis of “political economy,” Peirce found ubiquitously dispersed “trappings which serve to hide from author and reader alike the ugly nakedness of the greed-god.”<sup>1546</sup> He went so far as to say that “society could not exist upon a basis of intelligent greed alone.”<sup>1547</sup> In a short anecdote about “the social atmosphere” he found in Baltimore, it “affected” him somewhat in his “prejudice against monsters of iniquity and

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<sup>1544</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.290.

<sup>1545</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1546</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 6.291.

<sup>1547</sup> *Ibid.*

against men of greed.”<sup>1548</sup> I fail to see, throughout these passages and innumerable others still, a “disarming candor” that reifies “the spirit of the prevailing business culture.”

What Horkheimer desired was a philosophy wherein ideas enjoy “freedom” and “an objectivity that did not submit to ‘our’ interests.”<sup>1549</sup> That Peirce sought Truth “regardless of what the color of that truth may be,”<sup>1550</sup> that Peirce demanded “severely critical thought”<sup>1551</sup> rather than submission to *any* authoritarian power, that Peirce sought freedom to inquire without externally prescribed values that altered and narrowed the trajectory of inquiry, leads me to the conclusion that Horkheimer justifiably, but ultimately mistakenly, read James retroactively back into Peirce without appreciating the massive divergences between the two thinkers. To what degree Horkheimer’s critique was valid as it applied to James (or Dewey) is beyond the scope of this current project, but suffice it to say, I hope I have demonstrated that when Horkheimer leveled his ire against pragmatism, Peirce, at least, ought not to have been in the crosshairs. Nor am I suggesting that Horkheimer’s call for an objective form reason, one that does not reduce theory to practicality, one that does not simply reify a totalitarian state and kneel at the altar of capital, is in any way mistaken. I agree with Horkheimer entirely. My point, merely, was to show that Peirce, in all the most substantive ways, would agree with him, too.

As Megill notes, far from having no clue as to how to transcend the current stultifying milieu, though Peirce was far from making this explicit, “the scientific method, the method of the future, provides a way in which a state of permanent

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<sup>1548</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 7.265.

<sup>1549</sup> Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Op. Cit.*, 31.

<sup>1550</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.605.

<sup>1551</sup> *Ibid.*

revolution, or open inquiry, can be established.”<sup>1552</sup> This was the beauty of Peirce’s theory that Horkheimer failed to see. In maintaining that Truth is established in the here and now, Horkheimer made no reference to the “long run” at all in his critique. Peirce’s method was, as Megill notes, a method of the future, an indefinite future terminating in the most hopefully optimistic union of Truth and an unlimited community. Precisely by being future-oriented, it places reason in a constant state of revolt against any indoctrinating system that would dictate its trajectory towards coming to understand an objective world. Fallibilism itself mitigates against technical rationality and the indoctrinating methods of capitalism that would pawn off beliefs conducive to its perpetuation as “necessary” rather than “contingent.” For the fallibilist, no claim, especially not from a source of authority, is beyond analysis, critique, and revision. As Peirce resolutely said:

The doctrine of fallibilism will also be denied by those who fear its consequence for science, for religion, and for morality. But I will take leave to say to these highly conservative gentlemen that however competent they may be to direct the affairs of a church or other corporations, they had better not try to manage science in that way. Conservatism...is altogether out of place in science – which has on the contrary always been forwarded by radicals and radicalism...not the radicalism that is cocksure, however, but the *radicalism that tries experiments*.<sup>1553</sup>

Fallibilism, the method of inquiry, is *radical*, not conservative, as Horkheimer claimed, conservative of the values of the current milieu. It looks to the *past* with a revolutionary eye: “[Peirce] well knew, from personal experience as a man of science and religion as well as from his knowledge of the past, what a tremendous and culture-wracking

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<sup>1552</sup> Megill, “Peirce and Marx,” *Op. Cit.*, 63.

<sup>1553</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.148.



revolution in basic beliefs the invention of modern science required.”<sup>1554</sup> It looks to the *future* and, in so doing, transcends the stultifying confines of the current milieu though not at the *expense* of the present, a present that demands experiment, curiosity, wonder, and engagement to challenge the beliefs pawned off by whatever authority is in control.<sup>1555</sup>

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<sup>1554</sup> Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 4.

<sup>1555</sup> Brent notes that Peirce, personally, had a life-long disdain for authority, with the exception of his love and admiration for his illustrious father, noting that Peirce refused to ever become an “obedient lad” or “go by ay rules that other people give” him, *Ibid.*, 25.

## Chapter 12

### Habermas' New Critical Approach to Pragmatism

As the decades wore on, new scholarly work on Peirce and a proliferation of previously unpublished manuscripts ushered in a new generation of scholars interested in peeking back in time *before* James's interpretation of pragmatism to view Peirce afresh. One such scholar was German born Karl-Otto Apel, professor at the University of Frankfurt, semeiotician, critical theorist, and friend of Jürgen Habermas, the foremost contemporary representative of the Frankfurt School. Apel's *Charles S. Peirce: From Pragmatism to Pragmatism* (1981) was crucial in ushering in a new age of Peirce scholarship by excavating the Kantian themes that run throughout Peirce's vast corpus. It was through Apel, and this Kantian reading, that Habermas came to ultimately incorporate many of Peirce's insights (consensus, community, inquiry, and semeiotics) into his own mature thought.<sup>1556</sup>

Although still critical of what he saw as nascent instrumentalism and a form of positivism<sup>1557</sup> in Peirce's work, Habermas' respect and appreciation for Peirce's

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<sup>1556</sup> In *Knowledge and Human Interests*, "Habermas discussed Peirce in great detail, regarding him as an example of self-reflection of nature science, but he thought that Peirce took notice only of the transcendental connection between knowledge and instrumental action (this idea of Peirce, by the way, was absorbed into Habermas' conception of human cognitive interests as one of its major dimensions), but did not move further by making serious reflection upon the intersubjective communication within the community of researchers," Shijun Tong, " 'Critique' Immanent in 'Practice': New Frankfurt School and American Pragmatism," *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 1, no. 2 (June 2006): 295 – 316, 310.

<sup>1557</sup> It's interesting to note that Habermas, like Horkheimer, saw Peirce as a positivist despite the fact that Apel, himself, made a point of arguing for the difference and vast superiority of Peirce's pragmatism over his positivist contemporaries: "if we look at Peirce's pragmatism...from the perspective of the present,

incalculable scholarly endeavors resonated on every page of his critique.<sup>1558</sup> Unlike Horkheimer, who had been “aware of pragmatism, but had been dismissive in his assessment,”<sup>1559</sup> Habermas both saw and appreciated Peirce’s connection to Kant whom he said contributed to the “concept of synthesis through social labor”<sup>1560</sup> (in a complementary manner to Marx’s own project<sup>1561</sup>) no doubt inspired by Apel.<sup>1562</sup> As Bookman notes, it was from Peirce, and his fellow pragmatists, that Habermas developed his own theory of the “consensus-making power of reason – an intersubjective outcome that emerges from problems detected in concrete situations.”<sup>1563</sup>

As with Horkheimer’s, I must limit myself to only a cursory evaluation of Habermas’ critique of Peirce and focus on two of the more salient facets of his

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then we see in it primarily the outline and program of a ‘logic of science’ for the future. It goes without saying the the logic of science that has been developed in the meantime by analytic philosophy, with the aid of mathematical logic, has come much farther than Peirce in technicalities. But it seems just as certain to me that the basic, two dimensional (syntactic-semantic) approach which modern work in the logic of science took over from logical Positivism’s anti-metaphysical program is fundamentally inferior to Peirce’s three-dimensional semiotic approach. The two-dimensional approach forces philosophers of science to reduce the metaphysical problems of the so-called pragmatic dimension, that is, problems regarding the subject who interprets and engages in science, by making them problems of an empirical science...if we take to its logical conclusions the idea, which Peirce had already implicitly founded in his logical Socialism [the ideal of a practicing community of inquirers], that the world cannot be known or explained merely by its previously fixed, lawful structure, but must rather continue to be developed as a historical, social world of institutions and habits for which we must assume responsibility, then it becomes evident that man confronts mankind with other tasks besides that of objectifying and explaining the world through science or of converting science into efficient behavior...human beings must remain for mankind the subject engaged in science and nonetheless be capable of being made the topic of rational knowledge and praxis,” Karl-Otto Apel, *Charles S. Peirce: from Pragmatism to Pragmaticism* (Amherst: the University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), 192 – 193.

<sup>1558</sup> Habermas was less complimentary in *Knowledge and Human Interests* than he was in a later paper entitled “Peirce and Communication.” Unfortunately, I must constrain my analysis to just the former work for the interest of time and, too, because *Knowledge and Human Interests* provides one of the most stunning critiques of Peirce’s work that is worthy of analysis on its own.

<sup>1559</sup> Andrew Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas* (Chesham: Acumen Publishing, 2005), 67.

<sup>1560</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 36.

<sup>1561</sup> “Marx articulates the category of labour within the context of political and economic theory; Peirce articulates it within the philosophy of science and thereby, Habermas suggests, makes explicit that which Marx had left implicit in his own work,” Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas*, *Op. Cit.*, 67.

<sup>1562</sup> “It was Habermas’s friend and colleague Karl-Otto Apel (who was himself developing a version of the theory of cognitive interests) who was among the first to rediscover Peirce,” *Ibid.*

<sup>1563</sup> Myra Bookman, “Forming Competence: Habermas on Reconstructing Worlds and Context-Transcendent Reason,” in *Habermas and Pragmatism*, ed. Mitchell Aboulafia, Myra Bookman and Catherine Kemp (New York: Routledge, 2002), 77.

argument:<sup>1564</sup> (a) Peirce's metaphysical commitments and their bearing on "consensus," and (b) the limits of Peirce's intersubjectivity. To the former, Habermas (like nearly every other Peirce scholar) found Peirce's metaphysical commitments ambiguous since Peirce seemed to demand both a "reality" that constrained inquiry (leading to a quasi-correspondence theory of truth where the sum-total of our beliefs matches a mind-independent reality) as well as a "reality" that was constituted *by* inquiry (leading to a quasi-consensus theory of truth where the sum-total of our beliefs *is* reality so constituted phenomenologically). The problem with the former was that the method of inquiry, bound to semeiotic and phenomenological categories, can only "hope" or vaguely strive to reach out to connect in some occult fashion with a mind-independent world. The problem with the latter was that without *some* verifiable connection to an objective reality, "consensus" becomes little more than a type of "perspectivism" without any assurance that Truth (in the long run) even exists let alone is being approximated. This fed into Habermas' second major critique of Peirce: the concept of "consensus" itself. Without *some* recourse to an objective grounding of inquiry, it is unclear how consensus is even achieved. Further, for Peirce, knowledge increased through a coordination of abduction and induction. However, Habermas claimed that we do not, in fact, communicate through syllogisms, and thus Peirce seemed to have no dynamic explanation for how our intersubjective communication took place beyond the mere "monologic" exchange of syllogisms which, when taken up for subjective verification by each member of the community, ultimately lead to an atomic individualism akin to Cartesian solipsism, that is, a philosophy of consciousness. The genesis of these dynamic

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<sup>1564</sup> Habermas' critique also continued Horkheimer's concern that pragmatism was ultimately bare instrumentalism but, having exhaustively engaged Horkheimer's concerns, I will refrain from further comment here.

critiques, I will argue, lies in Habermas' conflation of Peirce's phenomenological categories and a brief overview of Peirce's so-called "phaneroscopy" will both clarify the objective backing for the community's consensus as well as illuminate the social individualism that conditions the kind of radical communicative interaction that Habermas ultimately champions.

Habermas saw in Peirce the foundations of an extraordinarily dynamic theory of Truth that emphasized communal consensus in a necessarily social and dialogical method of belief formation. However, Habermas claimed that the ambiguities inherent in Peirce's metaphysics derailed Peirce's efforts to construct his theory without raising seemingly insurmountable problems. After attempting to disambiguate Peirce's apparent metaphysical conception of "reality" from his phenomenological conception of "reality," Habermas dug into the latter, his preferred interpretation of Peirce as maintaining that "reality" is constituted through intersubjective inquiry. However, having dissolved Peirce's conception of "reality" (in his early work) as metaphysically independent of cognition, Habermas was at pains to see how Peirce could have any sort of objective gauge by which to form consensus or demonstrate the progress of inquiry. Without *some* criterion by which to achieve consensus, Peirce's method threatened to succumb to a banal sort of "perspectivism" which neither explained consensus nor aided in dissolving antagonistic beliefs. Habermas *offered* such a criterion without succumbing to the ego-centric trap of postulating a mind-independent realm: a transcendence from within that created objectivity through dialogical means, a middle-ground between the false ontologizing of a mind-independent, inaccessible world and pure subjectivism where no belief can be demonstrated to be more "true" than any other. However, I will argue that a

closer look at both Peirce's phenomenology as well as his quasi-Kantian conception of "purposefulness," "practices," and abduction, might establish a more favorable reading of Peirce for Habermas.

In engaging Peirce's method of inquiry, "questions arise about truth and reality" at which point, along with nearly every other Peirce scholar, Habermas found that "Peirce's account is ambiguous."<sup>1565</sup>

On the one hand Peirce defines 'truth' as the ideal permanent consensus of scientists at the limit of the application of their method of testing and self-correction, and defines 'reality' as the totality of possible true statements. On the other hand Peirce wants to retain some notion that this set of true statements 'corresponds' to an external reality which somehow guarantees the success of science by self-correction.<sup>1566</sup>

If reality is based *only* on consensus (the totality of possible true statements), this fails to provide a robust criterion for what *makes* statements "true" to begin with and how consensus is ultimately forged if there is no external permanence acting as a gauge against which to measure the veracity of propositions. On this model, reality is *constituted* through inquiry. On the other hand, if reality constrains inquiry's trajectory, guaranteeing consensus and the success of science by self-correction by supplying that external gauge against which to measure the veracity of beliefs and pull them together into consensus over the long run, on this model reality is *discovered* through inquiry. However, Habermas noted that Peirce was quite insistent that we are bound within an unlimited network of signs and language as well as the three phenomenological categories of experience and thus, on this reading, Peirce can either only vaguely grasp "beyond" his own cognitive faculties to a kind of Kantian world-in-itself to which the

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<sup>1565</sup> Mary Hesse, "Habermas' Consensus Theory of Truth," in *PSA: Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, vol. 2, *Symposia and Invited Papers* (1978): 373 – 396, 375.

<sup>1566</sup> *Ibid.*

ultimate opinion would have to somehow “correspond,” or else admit that reality is forged of beliefs without *any* external gauge or objective permanence with which to determine the veracity of our beliefs. For Peirce, it would seem, we either have consensus without correspondence or else we have correspondence that is doomed to fail under the proviso that we can never get out of our semeiotic-cum-linguistic-cum-phenomenological realm of experience (or, for Habermas, the unfortunate problem that Peirce seemed to want both at once without showing how this could happen).

Ultimately, Habermas rejected “Peirce’s contemplative notion of reality uniquely constraining the truth-seeking process of science”<sup>1567</sup> given Peirce’s adamant rejection of spectator theories of knowledge, and sided with the *other* reading of Peirce that eschews correspondence in favor of consensus as generative of “Truth.”<sup>1568</sup> Without a constraint on inquiry, however, it remains to be seen what justifies the veracity of propositions made by the community of inquirers.

Like Horkheimer, Habermas rejected any theory of knowledge acquisition that was wholly subjective and sought, instead, an objective ground to gauge truth claims. However, an objectivism *too* divorced from discursive practices opens the unbridgeable chasm between language and mind-independent reality. Such an “objectivism deludes the sciences with the image of a self-subsistent world of facts structured in a lawlike manner; it thus conceals the a priori constitution of these facts.”<sup>1569</sup> In an interesting reversal of critique, whereas Horkheimer accused Peirce of cold, selfish subjectivism in reducing all thought to practical benefits for the individual him or herself, Habermas comes at Peirce

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<sup>1567</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1568</sup> “Habermas...rejects the correspondence account, and locates truth in the consensus which the scientific community would reach at a postulated limiting point of this process,” *Ibid.*, 382.

<sup>1569</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 86.

from the opposite side of the critical spectrum,<sup>1570</sup> claiming Peirce couldn't "escape from objectivism" and thus could not "comprehend...the foundation of the knowledge-constitutive interests toward which"<sup>1571</sup> his thought was directed. What Habermas sought was a new "self-reflection of the sciences,"<sup>1572</sup> a "methodology that transcends its own boundaries," and, given the "the self-correcting nature"<sup>1573</sup> of Peirce's method of inquiry, saw "the beginnings of this sort"<sup>1574</sup> of theory in the work of Peirce.<sup>1575</sup> Once we shed ourselves of what Habermas called the "misleading ontologizing" of nature,<sup>1576</sup> "we can understand a given scientific system of reference as the result of interaction between the knowing subject and reality."<sup>1577</sup> Habermas readily admitted that the "first to tread the dimension of a self-reflecting philosophy of science was Charles Sanders Peirce"<sup>1578</sup> but

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<sup>1570</sup> "Objectivism, which makes a dogma of the prescientific interpretation of knowledge as a copy of reality, limits access to reality to the dimension established by the scientific system of reference through the methodical objectivication of reality. It prohibits discerning the a priori element of this system of reference and calling into question in any way its monopoly of knowledge," *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>1571</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>1572</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1573</sup> John E. Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 24 – 25.

<sup>1574</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1575</sup> Along with the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, an analysis of whom is unfortunately beyond the scope of this current project.

<sup>1576</sup> Now, it is true that Peirce saw nature structured in a lawlike manner, maintaining, that "intelligibility" is "reason objectified" (Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.366) and that "our physical science, whatever extravagant historicists may say, seems to have sprung up uncaused except by man's intelligence and nature's intelligibility" (*Ibid.*, CP 2.13), such that nature acts according an "intelligible law" (*Ibid.*, CP 1.366). All of this gives credence to Habermas' concerns. The objectivism that Habermas alludes to would indicate a commitment to a type of metaphysical realism, the "self-subsistence" of an external world, specifically, external to our experience of it, from which Peirce, he says, could not escape. What complicates matters here is that, although Peirce did claim that the universe was structured in a lawlike manner, it was neither wholly clear whether or not this word was "self-subsistent" (mind-independent) or whether it concealed the constitution of its lawlike mechanisms. Peirce developed three "metaphysical" categories of being as complements (though not identical) to the phenomenological categories: possibility, actuality, and destiny or "law" (*Ibid.*, CP 1.483). Although it can be argued that the two sets of categories result in a sort of parallelism (one set governs mind-independent "being", the other governs phenomenological experience), because, like Habermas, I do not read Peirce as an adherent to correspondence theories of truth, I believe a transactional view of the categories is more faithful to Peirce's overall project wherein individual inquirers are just as much a part of the "world" as the world is manifest in individual cognition, and thus the triadic categories bleed through the perennially semi-permeable membranes between self and other, mind and world.

<sup>1577</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 89 – 90.

<sup>1578</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.



with correspondence to a wholly external reality dissolved, it remains to be seen what gauge for objectivity (of the non-problematic variety) remains to ground his method of inquiry.

The problem with Peirce's theory, for Habermas, was two-fold: on the one hand, reality seemed to exist *prior to* inquiry and constrained its trajectory while simultaneously existing as constituted *by* inquiry. The former granted an objective criterion to evaluate the veracity of propositions but succumbed to the misleading ontologizing of a mind-independent realm. The latter eschewed correspondence for consensus but lost its objective gauge. What's worse is that Peirce seemed to hold both at once. On the other hand, if Peirce insisted that we are limited in our cognition of reality through the sphere of signs, language, and phenomenology, how can we know that our beliefs *about* reality are true if our beliefs *make* reality to begin with?

Habermas illuminated this apparent disparity<sup>1579</sup> and ultimately rejected a correspondence reading, noting that Peirce "can no longer regress to the objectivist attitude in which knowledge appears as a description of reality that can be detached from the knowing subject" precisely because Peirce's method "comprehends the process of inquiry as a world-constituting life activity (*Lebenspraxis*)."<sup>1580</sup> As I argued earlier, this strikes me as a perfectly legitimate reading of Peirce who simply cannot, as I maintained

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<sup>1579</sup> "...[I]t may be said that this view is directly opposed to the abstract definition which we have given of reality, inasmuch as it makes the characters of the real depend on what is ultimately thought about them. But the answer to this is that, on the one hand, reality is independent, not necessarily of thought in general, but only of what you or I or any finite number of men may think about it; and that, on the other hand, though the object of the final opinion depends on what that opinion is, yet what that opinion is does not depend on what you or I or any man thinks...the opinion which would finally result from investigation does not depend on how anybody may actually think. But the reality of that which is real does depend on the real fact that investigation is destined to lead, if continued long enough, to a belief in it," see *Ibid.*, 95 – 96, and Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.408.

<sup>1580</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 95.

earlier, hold any sort of correspondence theory of truth precisely because, as Habermas notes here, “reality” is the *ongoing process* of a “world-constituting life activity.”

Ultimately, as Habermas claimed, for Peirce “*reality* means nothing but the sum of those states of fact about which we can obtain final opinions.”<sup>1581</sup> For Peirce, it was the “mechanism of the process of inquiry as a self-regulating, cumulative learning process”<sup>1582</sup> that constituted the objects of possible experience, a position that is ubiquitously dispersed throughout Peirce’s corpus.<sup>1583</sup> This follows from a strictly phenomenological reading of Peirce’s idealism wherein Thirdness *is* “Reality” so constituted by experience.<sup>1584</sup>

This led Peirce to the conclusion, Habermas rightly pointed out, “that there can be no knowledge that is not mediated by prior knowledge” and thus “the cognitive process is discursive at every stage.”<sup>1585</sup> All thought,<sup>1586</sup> for Peirce, was thought mediated by

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<sup>1581</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1582</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1583</sup> “Everything, therefore, which will be thought to exist in the final opinion is real,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.12; “The object of the final opinion depends on what that opinion is,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.408; “The objective final opinion is independent of the thoughts of any particular men, but is not independent of thought in general,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.336; “Reality is only the object of the final opinion to which sufficient investigation would lead. That belief gradually tends to fix itself under the influence of inquiry is, indeed, one of the facts with which logic sets out,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 2.693; “It is a real which only exists by virtue of an act of thought knowing it, but that thought is not an arbitrary or accidental one dependent on any idiosyncrasies, but one which will hold in the final opinion,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 8.14.

<sup>1584</sup> Peirce examined the act of “guessing” as “the nature of hypothesis as a reflection of the *constitution* of nature,” Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, *Op. Cit.*, 205. My emphasis. Further, Peirce attacked purely mechanistic (spectator) theories of reality, especially that of LaPlace. Such a position, Peirce argued, “could not account for such major features of the universe as novelty, growth, complexity, consciousness, diversity, and irregularity,” *Ibid.*, 208. Only a theory that entailed human participation in the *constitution* of reality, taking into account “variety” and “diversity,” could account for the nature of reality, Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.102 – 6.163.

<sup>1585</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 95.

<sup>1586</sup> “If we seek the light of external facts, the only cases of thought which we can find are of thought in signs. Plainly, no other thought can be evidenced by external facts. But we have seen that only by external facts can thought be known at all. The only thought, then, which can possibly be cognized is thought in signs. But thought which cannot be cognized does not exist. All thought, therefore, must necessarily be in signs,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.215.

signs.<sup>1587</sup> The key here, as Cooke notes, is that “the mind is not *given* thoughts; rather, the mind *takes* an object and it always takes the object *in some respect*. The thought-sign is an interpretation of the object.”<sup>1588</sup> This resonates with both Peirce’s rejection of private, isolated thoughts as well as any spectator theory of knowledge, for every thought necessarily suggests other thoughts, “which become the signs of something to the later thought. It is never the case that a previous thought-sign does not determine the next one.”<sup>1589</sup> Thus, ultimately, “we can never get outside the realm of signs.”<sup>1590</sup>

If all cognition is semiotic in nature, cognition manifests exclusively in a social realm of language that necessarily, for Peirce, had a public character. Peirce thus had a “social view of knowledge.”<sup>1591</sup>

Signs are not given by introspection but through language and use. Even those thoughts which *seem* private and introspective are in fact signs. And, as signs, thoughts depend in large part upon the community for their derivation of meaning and correct use. Peirce’s sign theory is part of his overall argument to replace the individual with the community as the proper subject of knowledge.<sup>1592</sup>

Cooke’s assertion that the proper subject of knowledge is the community, rather than the individual, is a controversial claim, indeed, since it would seem that only individual’s

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<sup>1587</sup> “There can be no purely isolated thoughts. They are all in interaction with other thoughts through inferences. The only way thoughts are intelligible is if they are brought together under general laws of the mind. A singular thought is by itself unintelligible, but it is made intelligible by the mind relating it to other thoughts...single thoughts are not really single at all, but are all interrelated with other thoughts. In fact, all meaning and intelligibility lie in the relations of thoughts, rather than in any one singular thought which is present to the mind at one instant. The real meaning of a thought lies in its similarity and comparisons with other thoughts,” Elizabeth Cooke, *Peirce’s Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 14 – 15.

<sup>1588</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>1589</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1590</sup> “A sign, in order to be a sign, must be interpretable, and signs can be interpreted only by other signs, so if we try to get at the meaning of any sign, we shall find only some other sign. Hence, if we think by means of signs at all – which we evidently do- we can never get outside the realm of signs,” Peter Skagestad, *The Road to Inquiry: Charles Peirce’s Pragmatic Realism* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1981), 24.

<sup>1591</sup> Cooke, *Peirce’s Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, *Op. Cit.*, 18.

<sup>1592</sup> *Ibid.*

could possibly be the bearers of knowledge claims. However, we must not forget Peirce's extreme form of social individualism wherein "a person is not absolutely an individual....all thought whatsoever is a sign, and is mostly of the nature of language" and that "man's circle of society ... is a sort of loosely compacted person, in some respects of higher rank than the person of an individual organism."<sup>1593</sup> Precisely because of Peirce's realism, and wholesale rejection of nominalism, universal concepts like "society" are quite real and not wholly reducible to the sum-total of its constituent parts.

As Habermas said, "because all knowledge is discursive, it is true that in thought we cannot jump out of the dimension of mediation. No matter how far we retrace our inferences to their premises, we remain caught in the compass of our interpretations."<sup>1594</sup> As Cooke notes, for Peirce, "we know the object from within a communal context which comes with its own interpretations of the objects."<sup>1595</sup> For Peirce, "all knowledge must be generated in the context of a challenge to prior beliefs. Knowledge, and crucially contact with the world, is therefore always already mediated by prior beliefs"<sup>1596</sup> which have, under ideal circumstances, been communally formulated utilizing the method of inquiry.

However, according to Cooke, though "we cannot meaningfully conceive of anything like uninterpreted facts," at the same time, "the facts cannot be exhaustively reduced to our interpretations."<sup>1597</sup> That is to say, for Peirce, we cannot simply be creating reality *ex nihilo* based on nothing but our interpretations which could easily degenerate, without an objective gauge, into a perspectivism or metaphysical relativism which would dissolve the possibility of dialogue or consensus. On the one hand, as

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<sup>1593</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.421.

<sup>1594</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 98.

<sup>1595</sup> Cooke, *Peirce's Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, *Op. Cit.*, 19.

<sup>1596</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1597</sup> *Ibid.*

Habermas noted, “every empirical basis on which we can conceivably rely is mediated by implicit inferential interpretations. These inferences, no matter how rudimentary, are tied to representational signs. Consequently, even perceptions already occur in the dimension of semiotic representation.”<sup>1598</sup> Peirce was quite explicit on this, noting, for example, “what are really abductions have been mistaken for perceptions.”<sup>1599</sup> Further, “even so called deceptions of the senses, where evidently it is the *inferences* that are at fault, we take for immediate perceptions.”<sup>1600</sup> On the other hand, “the empirical basis cannot be totally mediated by thought. Besides the logical laws it obeys, the process of reasoning linked to signs depends on information inputs. It does not proceed immanently, but incorporates impulses deriving from experience.”<sup>1601</sup> As such, as Habermas notes, Peirce pulled up short of an idealist’s abandonment of the “distinction between thought and a contingently experienced reality.”<sup>1602</sup>

Habermas rightly highlighted the stimulus for cognitive development in the engagement with problematic situations that arise out of Secondness, or the “resistance” of “independent original stimuli.”<sup>1603</sup> However, an “independent” source of the original stimuli for cognitive development problematizes Peirce’s pragmatism by setting up a quasi-Kantian “thing-in-itself,”<sup>1604</sup> something Peirce adamantly rejected throughout his career.

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<sup>1598</sup> *Ibid.*, 97 – 98.

<sup>1599</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.188.

<sup>1600</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 4.51.

<sup>1601</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 98.

<sup>1602</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1603</sup> “Nevertheless, the process through which old beliefs that have become problematic are transformed into new, recognized interpretations is prompted only by independent original stimuli, which attest to reality’s resistance to false interpretations and turn into stimuli of thought processes,” *Ibid.*

<sup>1604</sup> “This conception leads to a difficulty that recapitulates the problems of the ‘thing in itself’ on a new level,” *Ibid.*

However (and this is key), Habermas called this resistance “reality.” As I discussed earlier, Peirce explicitly associated “reality” with Thirdness and the “resistance” of the encountered external world with Secondness. Although this seems counter-intuitive to traditional conceptions of “reality,” nevertheless, it would seem that Habermas conflated one phenomenological category with another. It was Peirce’s conception of Secondness<sup>1605</sup> that was the experience of “struggle.”<sup>1606</sup> “Reality” was Thirdness, the constitution of a lawlike structure that pulls together the various disparate aspects of our phenomenological experience. Nevertheless, “reality” as it is often construed as that which is outside phenomenological experience does *seem* to be that which provides the resistance experience in Secondness,<sup>1607</sup> by whatever name. Of course, there is a difference between “independent” and “unknowable.” As we’ll see, Peirce makes just such a distinction through a radical departure from traditional conceptions of “self” and the function of “mind.”<sup>1608</sup>

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<sup>1605</sup> “The phaneron does contain genuine secundans. Standing on the outside of a door that is slightly ajar, you put your hand upon the knob to open and enter it. You experience an unseen, silent resistance. You put your shoulder against the door and, gathering your forces, put forth a tremendous effort. Effort supposes resistance. Where there is no effort there is no resistance, where there is no resistance there is no effort either in this world or any of the worlds of possibility. It follows that an effort is not a feeling nor anything priman or protoidal. There are feelings connected with it: they are the sum of consciousness during the effort. But it is conceivable that a man should have it in his power directly to summon up all those feelings, or any feelings. He could not, in any world, be endowed with the power of summoning up an effort to which there did not happen to be a resistance all ready to exist. For it is an absurdity to suppose that a man could directly will to oppose that very will,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.320.

<sup>1606</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.322.

<sup>1607</sup> “[Man] defends himself from the angles of hard fact by clothing himself with a garment of contentment and of habituation. Were it not for this garment, he would every now and then find his internal world rudely disturbed and his fiats set at naught by brutal inroads of ideas from without. I call such forcible modification of our ways of thinking the influence of the world of fact or experience. But he patches up his garment by guessing what those inroads are likely to be and carefully excluding from his internal world every idea which is likely to be so disturbed. Instead of waiting for experience to come at untoward times, he provokes it when it can do no harm and changes the government of his internal world accordingly,” *Ibid.*, CP 1.321.

<sup>1608</sup> For the pragmatists, “‘mind’ is not something subjective or simply ‘between the ears.’ Instead, ‘mind’ signifies ‘minding’ in the sense of directing available resources to the attentive management of problems, akin to ‘minding the store,’” Frank Ryan, *Seeing Together: Mind, Matter, and the Experimental Outlook of*

Peirce adamantly rejected any immediate intuiting as the source of knowledge in either a Cartesian or Lockean sense. Nevertheless, as Habermas noted, “what is incorporated in the interpretations of our inferential thought is something immediate, although it cannot be represented by it *as* unmediated and ultimately given” even though “all of our statements about ‘the real’ are in some measure grounded”<sup>1609</sup> in this external reality. Peirce held both, according to Habermas, “the concept that reality...derives from [a] methodological concept of truth” that “prohibits any thought of something evidently ultimate and unmediated”<sup>1610</sup> and yet, at the same time, that “the Unanalyzable, the Inexplicable, the Unintellectual runs in a continuous stream through our lives.”<sup>1611</sup> On the one hand, according to Peirce’s phenomenological idealism, “reality” is *constituted* in “Thirdness.” On the other hand, “reality” seems to be that which we encounter phenomenologically *as* “resistance” in “Secondness” that is an integral component to belief formation and the determination of what, reality, ultimately is. It is this precise ambiguity towards which Habermas draws our attention.

Peirce insisted, as we’ve seen, that though there *is* “something *noumenal*” in experience, this “something” is *also* “intelligible, conceivable, utterly unlike a thing-in-itself.”<sup>1612</sup> Further:

This theory of reality is instantly fatal to the idea of a thing in itself, -- a thing existing independent of all relation to the mind's conception of it. Yet it would by no means forbid, but rather encourage us, to regard the appearances of sense as only signs of the realities. Only, the realities which they represent would not be the unknowable cause of sensation, but

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*John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley* (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: American Institute for Economic Research, 2011), 30.

<sup>1609</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 98.

<sup>1610</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>1611</sup> *Ibid.* And see Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.289.

<sup>1612</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.553.

noumena, or intelligible conceptions which are the last products of the mental action which is set in motion by sensation.<sup>1613</sup>

“Immediacy” is predominantly located in the category of Firstness. There *is* something immediate and unintelligible in Peirce’s phenomenological circuit of inquiry in the sense of it being prior to the distinction of “it from other” (Secondness) and prior to linguistic and conceptual systematizing (Thirdness). As Hoopes notes, “Firstness,” these “feelings,” are “immediate” but “a meaningless immediacy until feelings are interpreted as representations or signs.”<sup>1614</sup> They are “immediate” only in the sense that they are prior to attentive inquiry and linguistic-cum-semiotic interpretation. They are explicitly “knowable” but, at the stage of “Firstness,” simply not-yet-known, that is, not yet interpreted.

Consider the following example from Peirce, one highlighted by Habermas, as well:

This ideal first is the particular thing-in-itself. It does not exist *as such*. That is, there is no thing which is in-itself in the sense of not being relative to the mind, though things which are relative to the mind doubtless are, apart from that relation. The cognitions which thus reach us by this infinite series of inductions and hypotheses (which though infinite *a parte ante logice*, is yet as one continuous process not without a beginning *in time*) are of two kinds, the true and the untrue, or cognitions whose objects are real and those whose objects are *unreal*.<sup>1615</sup>

For Peirce, the “real is revealed in a similar fashion as individuation, something that we must first have had when we discovered that there was an unreal, an illusion; that is,

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<sup>1613</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 8.13.

<sup>1614</sup> James Hoopes, *Community Denied: The Wrong Turn of Pragmatic Liberalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 180.

<sup>1615</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.311 and Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests, Op. Cit.*, 99 – 100.



when we first corrected ourselves.”<sup>1616</sup> Yet the real is not revealed *only* through negation (what it is not) but is *also* through “that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you.”<sup>1617</sup> This “conception of reality” (and it is a “conception”) is thus essentially involved with a notion “of a COMMUNITY, without definite limits, and capable of a definite increase in knowledge.”<sup>1618</sup> The “real” is in part revealed through negation (the recalcitrance experience in Secondness) but ultimately constituted in Thirdness while all the time lingering in the immediacy of Firstness that has yet to be disrupted by the onset of tension. In the long run, our beliefs will be refined through a community of inquirers as our “Thirdness” (which is a necessarily social dimension of Peirce’s phenomenology, as we’ve seen) is strengthened.<sup>1619</sup> Precisely because that which is thought (Thirdness) contains the brute experience of existence (Secondness) and a full, unproblematic immersion in the world (Firstness), it follows that, “consequently, that which is thought in these cognitions is the real, as it really is. There is nothing, then, to prevent our knowing outward things as they really are, and it is most likely that we do thus know them in numberless cases, although we can never be absolutely certain of doing so in any special case.”<sup>1620</sup>

As Habermas said, “Peirce denies a thing in itself in the sense of transcendental philosophy, a reality that *affects* our senses while yet merely *appearing* under the

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<sup>1616</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.311.

<sup>1617</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1618</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1619</sup> “And so those two series of cognition -- the real and the unreal -- consist of those which, at a time sufficiently future, the community will always continue to re-affirm; and of those which, under the same conditions, will ever after be denied,” *Ibid.*

<sup>1620</sup> *Ibid.*

transcendental conditions of possible objectivity and thus unknowable as such.”<sup>1621</sup> Habermas was quite right, highlighting Peirce’s rejection of any sort “spectator” theory of knowledge that maintains consciousness is affected by an external reality without actively participating in its constitution. As Peirce said, it is a common belief that “the real things in this world” are merely “blind unconscious objects working by mechanical laws together with a consciousness as idle spectator.”<sup>1622</sup> Peirce maintained, “this spectator cannot have part or lot even in the intelligence and purpose of the business; for intelligence does not consist in feeling intelligently but in acting so that one’s deeds are concentrated upon a result.”<sup>1623</sup> As a consequence, this theory “makes the universe a muddle. According to it consciousness is perfectly impotent and is not the original of the material world; nor on the other hand can material forces ever have given birth to feeling, for all they do is to accelerate the motions of particles.”<sup>1624</sup> External matter operates through means wholly external to the spectacular-subject. It leaves “no room for reaction between mind and matter.”<sup>1625</sup> The fundamental confusion, he maintained, stems from the theory’s “incautious assumption that it is one thing to look red or green and another thing to see red or green.”<sup>1626</sup> The “muddle” of the spectator theory begins to dissolve once one realizes “the spectator is no longer on one side of the footlights, and the world on the other. He is, in so far as he sees, at one with the poet of the piece. To act intelligently and

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<sup>1621</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 100.

<sup>1622</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.559.

<sup>1623</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 7.559. The concentration here upon a “result” might seem to conflict with Peirce’s insistence that the goal of Truth has nothing whatever to do with “action.” Peirce may have equivocated on occasion in terms of his assessment of “action” in its relationship to “Truth.” Although the *sole* end of inquiry is not the refinement of practical activity, the *transational* model of inquiry certainly contains an active component (the act of inquiry and experimentation itself). This activity, however, is the means to the end of Truth, not an end in itself. The transactional model (the inquiring organism transacting with its environment) is an *active* model of belief formation rather than the far more passive model found in spectator theories which Peirce opposed.

<sup>1624</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 7.560.

<sup>1625</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1626</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 7.561.

to see intelligently become at bottom one.”<sup>1627</sup> This was the *only* method, for Peirce, that “promises to render the totality of things thinkable; and it is plain there is no other way of explaining anything than to show how it traces its lineage to the womb of thought.”<sup>1628</sup> Thus, Peirce eschewed the spectator theory with its mind/world dualism and adapted the only theory that he believed can render the world intelligible: “this is what is called Idealism.”<sup>1629</sup> Rather than proceeding from the unfounded assumption of an unbridgeable divide between mind and world, Peirce insisted that both mind *and* world are parts of what we mean by “reality” in total. Rather than external matter (unintelligible in itself) affecting a passive consciousness, both matter and mind, world and consciousness, engage in a transaction like the transactions that take place between inquirers in dialogue. For Peirce, this form of idealism is the only way to render the world intelligible by assuming that consciousness is (justifiably) part *of* the world. In this light, the method of inquiry may be seen as the only productive means of clarifying our beliefs by reuniting us not only with our community of inquirers through growing consensus but, too, reuniting us with the world that we’re intimately engaged and could not divorce ourselves if we wished. Such a reading is corroborated by Peirce’s holism manifest in both Firstness (the fundamental unity of self and other in the greater social organism as well as the pre-reflective immersion in experience of Firstness [what Dewey would call the “having” of an experience as opposed to “knowing”<sup>1630</sup>]) and an ultimate form of Thirdness (in the sense of a ultimate opinion and complete picture of reality ideally awaiting us at the end

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<sup>1627</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 7.562.

<sup>1628</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 7.563.

<sup>1629</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 7.564.

<sup>1630</sup> Ryan, *Seeing Together: Mind, Matter, and the Experimental Outlook of John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley*, *Op. Cit.*, 23.

of the long run, that is, once our idiosyncrasies have been overcome through the deployment of Peirce prescribed method).

Thus, Habermas would *agree* with Peirce that this “ideal first, even if it cannot be conceived as a thing in itself, is not just nothing.”<sup>1631</sup> For Peirce, the ideal first *is* the world within which an inquirer finds him or herself already thrown: in Firstness, the world is experienced unproblematically, a “nonreflective background of experience characterized not by discrete properties...but by a fit that ‘hangs together’ as a gestalt or unity.”<sup>1632</sup> In Secondness, some discrete aspect of the world is experienced as a problem that divides itself from the unproblematic. Habermas asked, “are not actual experiences the source of the information that enters the implicit inferences of perception and of judgment and that is elaborated by thought processes into definitive beliefs?”<sup>1633</sup> That is, I maintain, precisely what Peirce was arguing.

Consider, for example, Peirce’s phenomenological account of hearing a train passing by in terms of the specific frame of Habermas’s question: is experience the source of the information that enters into our inferences that create our beliefs through inquiry? As Peirce said, “we perceive objects brought before us; but that which we especially experience -- the kind of thing to which the word “experience” is more particularly applied -- is an event.”<sup>1634</sup> Experience is a total “event,” moving from an unproblematic immersion in the world (Firstness), disrupted by a tension (Secondness), analyzed and cognitively coordinated into a systematic understanding (Thirdness). “Experience” constitutes this entire “event” that admits of no degenerate parts but is

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<sup>1631</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 100.

<sup>1632</sup> Ryan, *Seeing Together: Mind, Matter, and the Experimental Outlook of John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley*, *Op. Cit.*, 23.

<sup>1633</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 100.

<sup>1634</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.336.

taken holistically.<sup>1635</sup> The act of “perception,” itself, is not applied to the event as a whole, but specifically directed at the phenomenological shift or change within the event itself (Secondness).<sup>1636</sup> In Peirce’s example, as a locomotive passes at high speed beside him, he perceives the sound of its whistle but when it suddenly *changes* its pitch the “event” of that change of pitch is experienced rather than perceived.<sup>1637</sup> The “shock” (Secondness) sets the event in motion as an experience, for whereas “the long whistle of the approaching locomotive...has set up in me a certain inertia...the sudden lowering of the note meets with a certain resistance.”<sup>1638</sup> However, the experience of shock (Secondness) is only experienced *as* shock because of the experience of the unproblematically expected (Firstness) that preceded it.<sup>1639</sup> As he said, every Secondness entails a Firstness. Thus, “the concept of *experience* is broader than that of *perception*, and includes much that is not, strictly speaking, an object of perception,”<sup>1640</sup> including the

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<sup>1635</sup> Each phenomenological category can be isolated for the purpose of analysis *as* a phenomenology though this isolation is highly artificial for the sole purpose *of* analysis and does not represent the permeability of the categories as they actually manifest. Firstness is a paradigmatic example: the immediacy of Firstness is never wholly capturable in analysis for the very act *of* analysis necessarily alters that which was immediately experienced. Nevertheless, an analysis of Secondness, to follow this example, demonstrates that if there is “disruption” there must have necessarily been something that *was* disrupted, that is, the unproblematic immediacy of Firstness.

<sup>1636</sup> “We cannot accurately be said to perceive events; for this requires what Kant called the ‘synthesis of apprehension,’ not however, by any means, making the needful discriminations,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.336.

<sup>1637</sup> “A whistling locomotive passes at high speed close beside me. As it passes the note of the whistle is suddenly lowered from a well-understood cause. I perceive the whistle, if you will. I have, at any rate, a sensation of it. But I cannot be said to have a sensation of the change of note. I have a sensation of the lower note. But the cognition of the change is of a more intellectual kind. That I experience rather than perceive,” *Ibid.*

<sup>1638</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1639</sup> “We cannot experience the vicissitude without experiencing the perception which undergoes the change,” *Ibid.*

<sup>1640</sup> *Ibid.*

unproblematic experience that came prior to the resistance as well as the cognitive understanding of what that disruption entailed that comes after.<sup>1641</sup>

Peirce, eschewing the spectator theory of knowledge, analyzed the experience of the locomotive as it actually occurs: “experience” entails the pre-reflective immersion of self and environment (Firstness) prior to any divisions of “mind” and “world,”<sup>1642</sup> the changing tone of the whistle that is perceived by the individual as attention-worthy (Secondness), and the cognition of the change (“being of an intellectual kind,” that is, Thirdness). As a complement to Peirce’s critique of Descartes’ method that threw *all* our beliefs into doubt,<sup>1643</sup> our experience extends to all that we do not, in the moment, perceive as the unproblematic background against which perception occurs (perception, that is, of a specific aspect of “existence” (Secondness) that presents itself as problematic or attention worthy against the background of an ongoing Firstness. The cognitive reconciliation of Secondness (this “shock”) into Thirdness is what Peirce called “reality.” We thus *constitute* “reality” in this process, portions of which (Firstness in terms of our pre-reflective immersion in it and Secondness in terms of the tension from it that we experience) stem from pre-reflective phenomenological experiences of the world as it really is. Thus, our constitution of “reality” is neither a “correspondence” between our beliefs *about* it and the way it is in-itself, nor is it wholly subjective and perspectival since our engagement with the world (the moments of “having” rather than “knowing”) comprise our constitution of it in Thirdness.

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<sup>1641</sup> “It is the compulsion, the absolute constraint upon us to think otherwise than we have been thinking that constitutes experience. Now constraint and compulsion cannot exist without resistance, and resistance is effort opposing change,” *Ibid.*

<sup>1642</sup> “It is perfectly simple and without parts,” *Ibid.*, CP 1.531.

<sup>1643</sup> Peirce, as a scientist, knew that for an experiment to work, there must be constants *as well as* variables, the former allowing us to focus our inquiry on the latter.

As Habermas explained, “the affection of the senses, in which the *facticity* and *immediate quality* of reality assert themselves, is thus a permanent occasion for transforming old interpretations into new ones.”<sup>1644</sup> Perception (the “affection of the senses”) is a part, but not the whole, of experience. For Peirce, the *experience* of “facticity” (Secondness) and the *experience* of “immediate quality” (Firstness) of reality do, indeed, provide the occasion for transforming old interpretations into new ones precisely because some disruption occurred that presented itself as problematic or attention-worthy, namely, our beliefs and habits which “work” in so far as they allow us to be immersed in a non-hostile world suddenly met with a tension (one or more of our beliefs were demonstrated to be false) that instigates inquiry towards a new and stronger equilibrium.<sup>1645</sup>

Habermas provided a formulation of how Peirce *ought* to have responded to what appeared to Habermas as a problematic account of idealism:

Peirce could counter that the constraint of reality dissolves to the extent that we obey its motivating force, advance the process of inquiry, and form true beliefs about reality. The constraint of reality would then be a complementary concept to the idea of the process of inquiry. In contrast to reality as the totality of all knowable matters of fact, this concept denotes the disproportion factually existing at a given time between our beliefs and reality. But Peirce did not argue in this fashion. Instead, he attempts a justification in terms of the logic of language. Had Peirce argued in the manner suggested, he would have realized the necessity of using the *logic of inquiry* to compensate for his denial, on grounds of the *logic of language*, of a ‘thing in itself.’<sup>1646</sup>

There is, for Peirce, as Habermas rightly said, a disproportion factually existing between our beliefs and reality, depending on how “reality” is defined. From the standpoint of a

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<sup>1644</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 101.

<sup>1645</sup> “The affecting power of things (to which we may not ascribe existence in themselves) is nothing other than the constraint of reality, which motivates us to revise false statements and generate new ones,” *Ibid.*

<sup>1646</sup> *Ibid.*, 101 – 102.

spectator theory of knowledge, this would present itself as a potentially unbridgeable divide. However, for Peirce, this disproportion was “problematic” only in so far as it provides the impetus for cognitive development. Reality, for Peirce, is the category of “Thirdness” *constituted* through inquiry. In the long run, the “disproportion” between our beliefs and reality (the sum-total of all true beliefs) would be dissolved. In the present, however, the disproportion is merely the fallibility of our current, provisional beliefs as they fail to (for the moment) reflect that ultimate state of beliefs at the end of the long run. It is not a disproportion between the sum-total of our beliefs and some entirely independent and unknowable reality-in-itself.

Habermas’ distinction between the “logic of language” and the “logic of inquiry” seems to me a problematic distinction to make. A belief is not merely a “true statement.” Beliefs are a nuanced form of habits, a predisposition to *act* in a certain way, not merely a report *about* the issue. Language certainly plays its role, but it seems mistaken to claim that either Truth or reality is the sum-total of all true *statements*. More accurately, I think, Truth or reality is the sum-total of all true *beliefs*, of which statement-making is an aspect of having a belief, but not exhaustive of what it means to have a belief. Reality wasn’t simply what we can truthfully *say* about it, for Peirce, it was the culmination of thought and action, theory and experimentation, an unproblematic immersion in the world.

Thus, when Habermas distinguished two functions in language (“the connotative [representative] and the denotative”<sup>1647</sup>) and suggested, “Peirce calls real the connotations of all predicates appearing in true propositions,”<sup>1648</sup> strictly speaking, this is not the case. Peirce said, quite explicitly, that the “real” is “what a word or other symbol or concept

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<sup>1647</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>1648</sup> *Ibid.*



denotes.”<sup>1649</sup> *Connotation*, Peirce said, refers to whether or not an object is “external” as opposed to “mental,”<sup>1650</sup> that is, whether it’s attributable to a problematic situation occurring through inquiry or merely a dream or fantasy. Habermas contended that, for Peirce, “the individual objects to which a true predicate is ascribed in a particular case, are denotations...the *facticity* of reality does not correspond to any linguistic content: consequently we cannot make any direct statement about it. Nonetheless, it can be grasped indirectly.”<sup>1651</sup> In a sense, this is quite true for Peirce. If “facticity” is a kind of “Secondness” wherein some aspect of existence presses in upon us, in a way that does not correspond to any linguistic content but is, rather, a pre-linguistic aspect of experience as “shock” or “recalcitrance.” It is *made* linguistic in Thirdness as we cognize and categorize the experience to forge a new belief. Strictly speaking, however, the linguistic content which is added to the shock of experience is, itself, not identical *to* the shock of experience, nor the unproblematic Firstness prior to the shock, and thus there is something, as Peirce said, “Inexplicable and Unintellectual”<sup>1652</sup> coursing through the content of our experience. For Peirce, “no thought in itself, then, no feeling in itself, contains any others, but is absolutely simple and unanalyzable.”<sup>1653</sup> These thoughts are “immediately present, a mere sensation without parts, in itself, without similarity to any other.”<sup>1654</sup> Every thought, “in so far as it is a feeling of a peculiar sort, is simply an ultimate, inexplicable fact.”<sup>1655</sup> As soon as we’ve had time to reflect, that which is

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<sup>1649</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.328.

<sup>1650</sup> Peirce’s distinction between “external” and “mental” is not a spectator theory of knowledge divide between world and mind. The “mental” is that which is constructed imaginatively without any transaction with the world through inquiry, like “dreams” or “fantasies,” see *Ibid.*, CP 6.327.

<sup>1651</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 102.

<sup>1652</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.289.

<sup>1653</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1654</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1655</sup> *Ibid.*

“present to me” in the moment has past and, further, “we can never bring back the quality of the feeling as it was in and for itself, or know what it was like in itself, or even discover the existence of this quality except by a corollary from our general theory of ourselves.”<sup>1656</sup> Firstness (and Secondness to no small degree), are more “havings” of experience rather than “knowings” (a cognitive Thirdness). As he said, there is “nothing which we can truly predicate of feelings is left inexplicable, but only something which we cannot reflectively know.”<sup>1657</sup> Firstness is a part of experience and entirely knowable (in Thirdness) but not knowable *in itself, as itself* as a Firstness which is, by definition, a pre-reflective component (a “having”) of experience. “In short, the Immediate (and therefore in itself unsusceptible of mediation -- the Unanalyzable, the Inexplicable, the Unintellectual) runs in a continuous stream through our lives; it is the sum total of consciousness, whose mediation, which is the continuity of it, is brought about by a real effective force behind consciousness.”<sup>1658</sup>

Through Peirce’s phenomenology, the “inexplicable” is not a Kantian thing-in-itself but the immediate component<sup>1659</sup> of experience which is “inexplicable” precisely because it occurs prior to explication. We *can* analyze it, but that analysis, explication, and cognizing is a different moment of the experiential process (specifically, Thirdness). Thirdness will have transformed it, categorized it, made sense of it, culminating in what Peirce meant by “reality.” It’s not a sort of incursion of the noumenal that makes it inexplicable, simply the immediacy of the “having” of experience prior to the “knowing.” We experience the shock as it really is (shock) and refine it thereafter.

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<sup>1656</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1657</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1658</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1659</sup> Experience, for Peirce, as we’ve seen, has both a “having” and a “knowing” of experience, an immediacy as well as a mediated component.

Further, as Habermas said:

The correlate of the denotative function of language is not completely the same as what is called, in epistemological contexts, the affection of our senses by things outside us. It is true that the denotative employment of a sign attests to the facticity of facts, in other words the mere way in which an existence that the subject immediately encounters forces itself upon him. But it does not take account of the substantive qualities that are also present in singular states of consciousness. The constraint of reality expresses itself not only in the resistance of things in general, but in specific resistance to *specific* interpretations.<sup>1660</sup>

Peirce seemed cognizant of the distinction Habermas was making here, between the constraint of reality independent of specific interpretations of its effect on the inquirer and how it plays out in specific situations, as his example of the train whistle portrayed. A clap of thunder out of a clear sky is the shock of resistance for a *specific* individual in a *specific* circumstance, the same noise on a rainy day monotonously continued would not even *be* experienced as shock but could, in fact, recede into the background gestalt of our immersive experience in Firstness. As Peirce said, “what I mean by the *external* might vary with how persons of a given general description *would* think under supposable circumstances.”<sup>1661</sup>

Habermas’s primary concern here was with the category of “Firstness” which has an air of immediacy but which, as part of our mental apparatus, appears to simultaneously be of the realm of representation (mediation). As he said:

The concept of quality is supposed to accomplish two incompatible purposes: To account for the moment of immediacy in singular sensations on the one hand and yet include an elementary representative function on the other...either quality corresponds to the substratum of the sign and is not iconic, or it retains its image character, in which case it must be classified as a representative symbol and is no longer immediate.<sup>1662</sup>

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<sup>1660</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 102 – 103.

<sup>1661</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.327.

<sup>1662</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 106.

It is true that an Icon, by itself, refers only to Firstness, the quality itself, devoid of representational value. As Peirce said, “a *Sign* or *Representamen*, is a First.”<sup>1663</sup> Although “an *Icon* is a *Representamen* whose *Representative Quality* is a *Firstness* of it as a First,”<sup>1664</sup> nevertheless, a “Sign...stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its *Object*, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its *Interpretant*, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object.”<sup>1665</sup> This necessary interactivity between the categories results in an inability to isolate, statically, any one category from the other two in anything other than a hypothetical and artificial abstraction for the sake of analysis of their respective functions. “The triadic relation is *genuine*, that is its three members are bound together by it in a way that does not consist in any complexus of dyadic relations.”<sup>1666</sup> For example, despite a sign’s relationship with a First, or immediate quality, “a sign may be *iconic*, that is, may represent its object.”<sup>1667</sup> Habermas’s critique that “quality” must *either* be representative *or* immediate may be based upon a belief that the categories were more divisible and isolatable than Peirce maintained. Depending on how the First is coordinated, it is *either* immediacy (hypothetically isolated and taken in itself) *or* representative (in conjunction with a Second and Third), even though Habermas insisted, “Peirce attempts to do both” while clearly not realizing “the incompatibility of these two perspectives.”<sup>1668</sup>

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<sup>1663</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, 2.274.

<sup>1664</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.276.

<sup>1665</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.274.

<sup>1666</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1667</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.276.

<sup>1668</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.* 107.

Nevertheless, Habermas was right to highlight the ambiguities of Peirce's conception of reality. I have attempted to offer a reading here wherein Peirce did *not* maintain a correspondence theory of truth nor was he an adherent of metaphysical realism (a mind-independent world), but scholars are heavily divided on this issue. The significance is far more profound than metaphysical confusion, however: if what grounds inquiry, determines and constrains its trajectory, and provides an objective gauge to denote its progress and create consensus and the foundation for authentic dialogue is located in the aspect of Peirce's metaphysics that we've jettisoned (correspondence to a mind-independent reality), Peirce was left with little to either justify science's progress or account for dialogue and consensus.

In *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas distinguished between "strategic action" and "communicative action." "The former would include purposive-rational action while action aimed at reaching an understanding would be communicative."<sup>1669</sup> Communicative deployment of reason to achieve understanding, in this sense, is inherently "non-instrumental."<sup>1670</sup> As Habermas said: "a communicatively achieved agreement has a rational basis; it cannot be imposed by either party, whether instrumentally through intervention in the situation directly or strategically through influencing decisions of opponents."<sup>1671</sup> This resonates with Peirce's first rule of reason, specifically (in his critique of authority) the mandate that "the arbitrary forcing" of beliefs upon others, "must...be given up"<sup>1672</sup> in favor of a more communal, egalitarian, democratic, and *free* interplay of ideas between inquiring participants within the

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<sup>1669</sup> David Rasmussen, *Reading Habermas* (Massachusetts: Basil Blackweel, 1990), 27.

<sup>1670</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1671</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 287.

<sup>1672</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.382.

community.<sup>1673</sup> There is, however, a perlocutionary aspect of communication, for Habermas, as there would seem to likewise be with Peirce. The dialogical component of inquiry, even in the most ideal setting, requires a modicum of *convincing* or *persuading* of the other party whose beliefs are antagonistic to one's own. This perlocutionary aspect of inquiry would have to, as Peirce said, be distinct from "forcibly" pushing one's belief onto another. Drawing upon a shared externality (a shared environment in which distinct inquiring organisms are engaged in mutual transactions), the perlocutionary act would be a directing of attention towards that shared externality and the processes of analysis, the tangible results of experimentation, and/or the constitution of a guiding theory. If there is a fact of the matter (say, for example, a heliocentric model of the galaxy), and two individuals earnestly engaged in the method of inquiry with antagonistic beliefs on the subject, the perlocutionary aspect of communication would be to place *all* available information on the communal table of analysis and work through it *together*, the inquirer who holds to the heliocentric model attempting to persuade the individual who does not of the veracity of the belief in heliocentricity by appeal to that which is communally verifiable for *all* parties without having to *force* his or her belief onto the other. Of course, the individual that maintains a geocentric model would undoubtedly be engaged in a similar perlocutionary endeavor, but precisely because of the fact of the matter and the communally accessible results of both inquiries, consensus is achievable between these initially antagonistic positions. Without an objective gauge for inquiry, Peirce's method would succumb to pure instrumentalism in the vein of Horkheimer's critique: if the

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<sup>1673</sup> Although Peirce's "practices," his conception of purposiveness, and his deployment of induction, construct a robust theory of "strategic action," it is complemented by a theory of "communicative action" that resonates with his "ethics," conception of purposefulness, and deployment of abduction in the ways I described above. Habermas will, however, explain the limits of Peirce's communicative action at the end of his critique to which I will return.

structures are dissolved that would allow individuals to come together to reach a mutual understanding, all that's left are the bare feedback-controlled reactions in the here and now.

Like Horkheimer, the problem of instrumental reason remained at the fore of Habermas's critique.<sup>1674</sup> As Swindal notes, Habermas criticized "positivist sciences for defining knowledge, not on the basis of a self-reflexive determination of conditions of critical knowledge, but by means of a closed relational system that generates its own definitions and relations with an assumed isomorphism of statements and facts."<sup>1675</sup> Peirce's method of inquiry did, certainly, include a "the self-correcting nature" of a procedure that "is supposed to reside in the fact that any conclusion reached is still subject to further review at the hands of those committed to following the method,"<sup>1676</sup> entailing the possibility of a very insular system. However, if read in conjunction with Peirce's fallibilism, wherein "if inquirers are not fallibilists, then they will not be open to questioning their beliefs, and thus they will not be open to new and worthwhile areas of inquiry" such that "the possibility of novel scientific discoveries will be thwarted,"<sup>1677</sup> Peirce's method may be viewed not a "closed" system but, rather, as "inclusive, open, and egalitarian as possible"<sup>1678</sup> and always "self-critical," maintaining an "experimentalist posture towards its own processes"<sup>1679</sup> "Closing" the system, as the

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<sup>1674</sup> As Rockmore notes, too, "like the early members of the Frankfurt School...Habermas stresses a view which does not reduce rationality to instrumental reason." Tom Rockmore, "The Epistemological Promise of Pragmatism," in *Habermas and Pragmatism*, ed. Mitchell Aboulafia, Myra Bookman and Catherine Kemp (New York: Routledge, 2002), 54.

<sup>1675</sup> James Swindal, *Reflection Revisited: Jürgen Habermas' Discursive Theory of Truth* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 93.

<sup>1676</sup> Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, *Op. Cit.*, 24 – 25.

<sup>1677</sup> Cooke, *Peirce's Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, *Op. Cit.*, 29.

<sup>1678</sup> Robert Talisse, "Towards a Peircean Politics of Inquiry," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 40, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 21 – 38, 28.

<sup>1679</sup> *Ibid.*

positivistic versions of science maintain, would violate Peirce's highest commandment:

"do not block the way of inquiry."<sup>1680</sup> As Misak notes,

The pragmatist...supports a kind of radical democracy in inquiry. Belief involves being prepared to try to justify one's views to others and being prepared to test one's beliefs against the experience of others. Thus the differences of inquirers – their different perspectives, sensibilities, and experiences – *must* be taken seriously. If they are not, reaching the best or the true belief is not on the cards.<sup>1681</sup>

Unlike Horkheimer, Habermas appreciated this critical distinction between Peirce's theory of science and the positivistic model. As Swindal notes, "Habermas argues that...Peirce attempted to break the force of positivism by developing scientific methodologies that could transcend their own empirical limits by means of critical self-reflection."<sup>1682</sup> Swindal rightly notes, too, that a central component of Peirce's method of belief formation about the nature of any given object of experience entailed a conception of thinking that is "mediated by signs."<sup>1683</sup> Buchler notes, for Peirce "communication takes place by means of signs, and Peirce's theory, in its investigation of the nature and conditions of sign-relations, endows with a new and vital significance that man is a social animal."<sup>1684</sup> However, Habermas was critical of Peirce's ruminations on the use of language because it "conceptualized the interpretation of signs abstractly, detached from

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<sup>1680</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.135.

<sup>1681</sup> Cheryl Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 94. This would, hypothetically, include *all* beliefs and interests, no matter how initially bizarre, for all beliefs and interests are justifiable for the individuals who maintain them to some degree. That justification, however rudimentary or peculiar, is worth noting and analyzing in the long push towards Truth in the long run, for history is full of initially peculiar beliefs that have, over time, come to bear intriguing fruit.

<sup>1682</sup> Swindal, *Reflection Revisited: Jürgen Habermas' Discursive Theory of Truth*, *Op. Cit.*, 93.

<sup>1683</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>1684</sup> Justus Buchler, introduction to *Philosophical Writings of Peirce* (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), xi-xii.



a model of linguistic communication between speaker and hearer.”<sup>1685</sup> There is certainly some validity to this claim that we will return to shortly.

What Habermas *did* appreciate was Peirce’s navigation between pure rational reflection (“knowledge advances...through practical engagement in the world”<sup>1686</sup>) and a “naïve empiricism” that founded knowledge claims on a supposed “immediate and intuitive contact with the world,”<sup>1687</sup> reflected in Peirce’s critique of the *a priori* method. For example, as Shalin notes, “contrary to Cartesian philosophy,” for Peirce, “the solitary knower cannot fathom the world in its complexity and growth, for he lacks the perspectival view...needed to grasp things’ multiple relationships.”<sup>1688</sup> This gives rise to a necessary communicative interactivity between participants in the community of inquirers<sup>1689</sup> and delves deeply into Peirce’s dynamic semiotics that was concerned with articulating the multiple relationships of signs between interpretants and objects of experience. Further, precisely because of the extremity of Peirce’s social individualism and first rule of reason, such communication must be uncoerced<sup>1690</sup> either by *a priori*, authority, or tenacity, and thus, conversely, must be open, egalitarian, inclusive, and democratic.<sup>1691</sup> As Dewey said, “freedom of inquiry, toleration of diverse views, freedom of communication, the distribution of what is found out to every individual as the ultimate intellectual consumer, are involved in the democratic as well as the scientific

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<sup>1685</sup> Swindal, *Reflection Revisited: Jürgen Habermas’ Discursive Theory of Truth*, *Op. Cit.*, 95.

<sup>1686</sup> Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas*, *Op. Cit.*, 69.

<sup>1687</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1688</sup> Dmitri N. Shalin, “Introduction: Habermas, Pragmatism, Interactionism,” *Symbolic Interaction* 15, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 215 – 259, 253 – 254.

<sup>1689</sup> “Only through social intercourse as a member of a community of inquirers, can the knower survey an object in several perspectives at once and thereby learn its true nature (or rather natures),” *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>1690</sup> “Uncoerced communications among free and rational human beings are thus required for any knowledge to be judged rational and objective,” *Ibid.*

<sup>1691</sup> “Each member of such a community of inquirers has the right – and a duty- to state one’s ideas clearly, communicate them to others, hear everybody out, and criticize established views, which are routinely revised as new evidence is brought to bear on the problem at issue,” *Ibid.*

method.”<sup>1692</sup> Although many scholars, Shalin included, argue that Dewey’s sentiment here “*extends* Peirce’s argument about communications and collective inquiry into the socio-political domain, where it is reformulated as the program of freeing communications from distortions inhibiting political inquiry and community building,”<sup>1693</sup> I have argued throughout this project that Peirce’s system *had* these concerns already in place, though clearly not as explicitly as did Dewey’s.<sup>1694</sup> As Shalin notes, “by freeing collective inquiry from domination,” precisely what the critique of authority was meant to highlight, “and bringing in individuals previously excluded from public discourse...we make society more rational, open, and humane.”<sup>1695</sup>

The collective project of signifying was not only central to Peirce’s philosophy as a whole, but also a critical analysis of the methods by which this collective project unfolds is central to critical theory’s aims at de-obfuscating the indoctrinating structures (especially, here, of language) of the Establishment. Peirce’s critique of the method of authority, in concert with his insistence on an *unlimited* community of inquirers,<sup>1696</sup> granted the foundation for the tension requisite for bringing these contingent beliefs into doubt which, in turn, motivated the process of radical social change. As Shalin notes, “understanding the constitutive power of symbolization, its capacity to mystify and reify, is a must if we want to break its stranglehold over our lives and reclaim control over our

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<sup>1692</sup> John Dewey, *Freedom and Culture* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1939), 43.

<sup>1693</sup> Shalin, “Introduction: Habermas, Pragmatism, Interactionism,” *Op. Cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>1694</sup> In expressing how Dewey *extends* Peirce’s project into the socio-political domain, for example, Shalin notes that for Dewey “the most insidious distortion is depriving members of society from the right and/or practical opportunity to participate in public discourse,” which is clearly articulated in Peirce’s attack on the “method of authority.” *Ibid.*

<sup>1695</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1696</sup> The significance of an *unlimited* community of inquirers is that, in a limited, specific socio-political coordination, it is entirely possible for a consensus to be reached that determine “truth” under the specific terms of an indoctrinating power (as in the method of authority). But extending the realm of inquiry past any socio-political boundary (in time *or* space), such indoctrinating truth claims are reduced to *provisional* and *contingent* (rather than *necessary* truths as they assuredly are presented to the people of these communities).

own destiny,”<sup>1697</sup> a concern central to the project of critical theory, a concern central to Habermas’s work in particular, and explored thoroughly by Peirce.<sup>1698</sup> The method of inquiry not only guards against *external* coercions (from authority) but *internal*, as well, (from tenacity and *a priority*). As such, unlike any of the other methods of belief formation, the method of inquiry, alone, deploys our faculty of reason as something that “becomes not only self-conscious but also self-critical,”<sup>1699</sup> notes Mead. “To facilitate the emergence of such a society is the task of pragmatist philosophy” such that “pragmatism, in this sense, is a critical undertaking”<sup>1700</sup> founded, as Dewey says, on the premise that “philosophy *is* criticism.”<sup>1701</sup>

Habermas continued the project of the Frankfurt School, criticizing the indoctrinating tendencies and the exploitation of nature inherent in consumer culture and capitalism. Just as in the method of authority, the manipulation of communication dissolves the potential for radically free and democratic inquiry. Habermas thus saw the potential for radical social change (at the macro-level of society) in a dynamic critique and radical reformulation of the semiotic structures of language and communication (at the micro-level<sup>1702</sup>). Emancipated from the indoctrinating and reifying tendencies of communicative interactions, harnessing this “illocutionary force which derives from society and empowers us in dealing with other people,”<sup>1703</sup> we can reconstruct what he

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<sup>1697</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>1698</sup> Perhaps the best resource for the mystifying and reifying qualities of semiotics can be found in Umberto Eco who was thoroughly Peircean.

<sup>1699</sup> George H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), 255.

<sup>1700</sup> Shalin, “Introduction: Habermas, Pragmatism, Interactionism,” *Op. Cit.*, 255.

<sup>1701</sup> John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover, 1929), 398. My emphasis.

<sup>1702</sup> “He pins his hopes for emancipation on the fact that the ossified social order can be deciphered and transcended on the micro-level, in routine symbolic interactions, where oppressive structures are reproduced in the structures of interpersonal communications,” Shalin, “Introduction: Habermas, Pragmatism, Interactionism,” *Op. Cit.*, 255.

<sup>1703</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

called the ideal speech situation which entails “establishing a discursive consensus about the most rational policies we can follow.”<sup>1704</sup> For Habermas, there was an “emancipatory potential built into communication structures themselves”<sup>1705</sup> that must be released from its indoctrinating and reifying confines in the modern milieu. Shalin summarizes the conditions for this “ideal speech situation” as follows: “(a) every interested individual has a practical chance to participate in discourse, (b) participants shun purely strategic motives, (c) validity claims are discursively redeemed, (d) policies are adopted by uncoerced consensus, and (e) rational decisions are subject to continuous revision.”<sup>1706</sup> The resonance with Peirce, if not complete agreement, is immediately apparent.

For Habermas, “rationality is understood to be a disposition of speaking and acting subjects that is expressed in modes of behavior for which there are good reasons and grounds. This means that rational expressions admit of objective evaluation.”<sup>1707</sup> Rationality, so construed, develops into a “consensus theory of truth” wherein:

Actions regulated by norms, expressive self-presentations, and also evaluative expressions, supplement constative speech acts in constituting a communicative practice which, against the background of the lifeworld, is oriented to achieving, sustaining, and renewing consensus – and indeed a consensus that rests on the intersubjective recognition of criticizable validity claims.”<sup>1708</sup>

With Habermas’ emphasis on intersubjective communication resulting in consensus, always against an already existing lifeworld,<sup>1709</sup> once again the similarity, if not perfect isomorphism, with Peirce’s thought is readily apparent.

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<sup>1704</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1705</sup> Habermas *The Theory of Communicative Action, Op. Cit.*, 390.

<sup>1706</sup> Shalin, “Introduction: Habermas, Pragmatism, Interactionism,” *Op. Cit.* 256.

<sup>1707</sup> Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Op. Cit.*, 22.

<sup>1708</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>1709</sup> The resonance with Peirce here may be found in Peirce’s insistence that all inquiry proceeds from the beliefs one already has which we could not shed if we wanted.

Nevertheless, although Peirce proved incalculably influential for the development of Habermas' own critical theory, Habermas still noted several deficiencies in Peirce's pragmatism. As Hesse notes, "Habermas' primary thesis is that the positivist theory of science is inadequate because it does not take account of what he calls *communicative* knowledge, that is, of the linguistic conditions of interpersonal communication, and because it is incapable of self-reflection, that is of applying itself to itself."<sup>1710</sup> Ultimately, Habermas argued that Peirce, though he certainly took great strides *away* from positivism, ultimately failed to provide an adequate account of the linguistic conditions of interpersonal communication within his method of inquiry.

"In Peirce's pragmatism, Habermas seeks to find a transcendental epistemology that avoids the pitfalls of a first philosophy, which is to say a transcendentalism that makes no substantial presuppositions as to what should count as knowledge."<sup>1711</sup> In this way, Habermas appreciated the Kantian strain in Peirce far more than Horkheimer had (again, no doubt due to Apel). The modification to Peirce's method was at the level of reflection upon "the justification of the *statements* scientists thereby produce" wherein, at this stage, "we rise to the level of logic of science or epistemology...what Habermas calls *discourse*."<sup>1712</sup> For Peirce, rather than focusing *only* upon "bare facts" or "raw data," his method demonstrated how "science progresses by proving old theories to be false, and replacing them with better theories" and "precisely through his explicitly transcendental framework, he is able to offer a more subtle account of both the constitution of the object of scientific knowledge and of the inquiring subject."<sup>1713</sup>

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<sup>1710</sup> Hesse, "Habermas' Consensus Theory of Truth," *Op. Cit.*, p. 375.

<sup>1711</sup> Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas*, *Op. Cit.*, 68.

<sup>1712</sup> Hesse, "Habermas' Consensus Theory of Truth," *Op. Cit.*, 375.

<sup>1713</sup> Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas*, *Op. Cit.*, 68.

Unlike his predecessors, Habermas was critical of too readily accepting Weber's pessimistic account of technical rationality. The concern, as Rasmussen notes, was that "reason, imprisoned in the modern subject, could express itself only instrumentally, resulting in the transition from a positive reading of the powers and capacities of reason in the modern world (Hegel) to the negative one (Weber)."<sup>1714</sup> Habermas attempted to show that "this was a false diagnosis," distinguishing between "subject-centered reason and reason itself,"<sup>1715</sup> the former instrumental and indoctrinating in all the ways Weber perceived, but the latter was "communicative" and inherently emancipatory.<sup>1716</sup> If a central task of critical theory was the "emancipation from instrumental reason,"<sup>1717</sup> it was to "communicative reason" that Habermas would turn. Not unlike Horkheimer's critique of subjective reason, Habermas' critique noted the lack of any "intersubjective"<sup>1718</sup> component to instrumental rationality. Thus, as Rasmussen notes, "the real enemy in the theory of communicative action is not Weber...but post-Cartesian philosophy of consciousness in general which was left with the concept of a completely isolated subject whose relationship to the world can be only instrumentally conceived and not intersubjectively established."<sup>1719</sup> Peirce, too, was critical of what he perceived to be Cartesian solipsism, the lack of any intersubjectivity in belief formation, and established his own form of communal, communicative, *social* individualism in sharp contrast to that "atomic" position.

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<sup>1714</sup> Rasmussen, *Reading Habermas*, *Op. Cit.*, 5.

<sup>1715</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1716</sup> "The rather startling premise for the project of the theory of communicative action and for the book bearing that title is not only that language as communicative discourse is *emancipatory*, but also that communicative forms of discourse have a certain priority over other forms of linguistic usage," *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>1717</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>1718</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>1719</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 – 26.

“In a sense, the original idea for a discourse ethics comes from Charles Sanders Peirce”<sup>1720</sup> who championed the necessity of an egalitarian community of free inquirers for the attainment of Truth in the long run. Rasmussen points out precisely the subtle notion I’ve discussed above, namely, the complementary necessities of both arriving at Truth in the long and a community capable of doing so: “Peirce’s idea was that the possibility of scientific truth presupposed a scientific community.”<sup>1721</sup> The normative component to Peirce’s insight here was that, prior to postulating the need for such an ideal community and the ideal of Truth, there was the conscious “decision to seek the truth, which in principle requires a normative decision preceding the discovery of scientific truth, the locus of which is to be found in the ideally postulated scientific community.”<sup>1722</sup> As Peirce said, “there is but one thing needful for learning the truth, and that is a hearty and active desire to learn what is true.”<sup>1723</sup> This “*passionate pursuit*”<sup>1724</sup> is the heart of Peirce’s first rule of reason. In this sense, “Peirce could be interpreted as one who...could be seen to depart from a purely empirical investigation to raise the question of the transcendental conditions for the possibility of such an investigation.”<sup>1725</sup> As such, “Peirce’s insight...was fundamental to the theory of communicative action itself.”<sup>1726</sup>

This is a fascinating critique that distances itself from Horkheimer’s precisely because Habermas was sensitive to the value of “truth” as a collective project in the long

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<sup>1720</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>1721</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1722</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>1723</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.582.

<sup>1724</sup> Guy Debrock, “Peirce, a Philosopher for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Part I: Introduction,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 28, no. 1. (Winter 1992): 1 – 18, 2.

<sup>1725</sup> Rasmussen, *Reading Habermas, Op. Cit.*, 59. Here, Rasmussen is comparing Peirce’s project to Kant’s with the added caveat that “unlike Kant, Peirce located those conditions not in the intuitions of an investigating subject, but in the postulation of an ideal community of investigators whose mutual understanding would regulate the nature of scientific truth.”

<sup>1726</sup> *Ibid.*

run and that Peirce resisted describing the scientific method as cold, calculating instrumentalism. For example, Habermas cited this lovely passage from Peirce on the efficacy of the sciences:

... if I am asked to what the wonderful success of modern science is due, I shall suggest that to gain the secret of that, it is necessary to consider science as living, and therefore not as knowledge already acquired but as the concrete life of the men who are working to find the truth.<sup>1727</sup>

When Peirce considered “the more immediate and more pertinent causes of the triumph of modern science...and the singleness of heart with which... they cast their whole being into the service of science,” was due to “their unreserved discussions with one another, to each being fully informed about the work of his neighbour, and availing himself of that neighbour’s results.”<sup>1728</sup> We see, immediately, shades of Peirce’s distinction between the Gospel of Christ and the Gospel of Greed, as I discussed, wherein the latter pits neighbour against neighbour and the former seeks to merge their interests in common purpose. Although Peirce was well-aware that even within science “there are a few self-seekers who succeed in gaining the power to make themselves more despised than they naturally would be,”<sup>1729</sup> the ideal community of inquirers are capable of “storming the stronghold of truth”<sup>1730</sup> by working together, in solidarity, a vibrant display of a Sartrean group-in-fusion which topples the Bastille and a lovely nod to the short story Peirce wrote when was a mere boy, already desirous of ascending the mountain of knowledge. “*This*,” Peirce said, “is the veritable essence of science. It is in the memory of these

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<sup>1727</sup> See Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 94. Also Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.50.

<sup>1728</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 7.51.

<sup>1729</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1730</sup> *Ibid.*



concrete living gestures that we gain the speaking portraiture of true science in all her life and beauty.<sup>1731</sup>

However, Habermas maintained that had “Peirce taken seriously the communication of inquirers as a subject that transcendently formed itself under empirical conditions, then he would have been forced to a self-reflection which would have exceeded its own limits as a fixed inquiry.”<sup>1732</sup> Habermas was ultimately critical of Peirce’s “failure to see only in the circle of instrumental action can initial conditions be set so as to produce an observable reaction that exhibits a universal effect.”<sup>1733</sup> In other words, Habermas was concerned that without a viable objective basis to gauge scientific progress Peirce had to fall back on merely the instrumental actions in the present to establish the conditions for observable success and the mere *hypothesis* of further success in the long run.

For Habermas, “we cannot break out of the sphere of language and argumentation.”<sup>1734</sup> As he said, “we can only establish the relation to reality, which is not equivalent to ‘existence,’ by projecting a ‘transcendence from within.’”<sup>1735</sup> Indeed, Peirce made such a distinction in his phenomenology, noting that Secondness was the category of “existence” (the recalcitrance we experience in inquiry) as opposed to Thirdness, the category of “reality,” which is *constituted* phenomenologically. As Swindal explains:

For Habermas this view of inner transcendence both respects the ‘objectivity’ of the intersubjectivity of understanding that has become reflexive and avoids the ontologization of reality...if the learning processes of the human species are limited to mirror only what is already

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<sup>1731</sup> *Ibid.*, my italics.

<sup>1732</sup> Swindal, *Reflection Revisted: Jürgen Habermas’ Discursive Theory of Truth*, Op. Cit., 96.

<sup>1733</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1734</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>1735</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, trans. W.M. Hohengarten (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992), 103.

contained in nature, they lose the convincing power of the better argument, and he espouses instead a kind of ‘intersubjective realism’: agreement always occurs *between* ego and alter *about* something in the world. Both the topic of the agreement and the other with whom agreement is reached give the intersubjective dialogue an objectivity.<sup>1736</sup>

Wanting to avoid the pitfalls of the timelessly problematic “ego-centric” predicament bound up with a “correspondence theory of truth,” Habermas sought to avoid the ontologization of reality and, with it, the gauge of having to “mirror” what is already contained in nature. Instead, he advocated a dynamic “consensus theory of truth” wherein both the topic (within the sphere of language) and the other (engaged through dialogue) reach an agreement that is not subjectively constituted as a mere whim or any personal fancy. As LaFont explains:

Habermas’s conception of objectivity can indeed be understood as an attempt to explain the sense in which ‘the way the world is’ constraints communicative practices from within. It also offers an explanation based on the idea that what is shared by all discursive perspectives is *that* there is a difference between what is objectively correct and what is merely taken to be so, not *what* it is; what they share is *formal* and, thus, it is not a cross-perspectival *content*.<sup>1737</sup>

Lafont maintains that, for Habermas, there were “conditions of possibility of discourse” which entailed that communication “requires that the participants share a sense of objectivity, for otherwise they would not see the need for deciding about the disputed validity claims one way or another.”<sup>1738</sup> For Habermas, communication presupposed the postulation of an objective world-view, for “if participants in communication are to evaluate whether things are the way they think or rather as someone else believes, they

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<sup>1736</sup> Swindal, *Reflection Revisited: Jürgen Habermas’ Discursive Theory of Truth*, Op. Cit., 97.

<sup>1737</sup> Cristina LaFont, “Is Objectivity Perspectival? Reflexions on Brandom’s and Habermas’s Pragmatist Conceptions of Objectivity,” in *Habermas and Pragmatism*, ed. Mitchell Aboulafia, Myra Bookman and Catherine Kemp (New York: Routledge, 2002), 188.

<sup>1738</sup> *Ibid.*, 188 – 189.

cannot at the same time dogmatically identify their own beliefs with the way the world is.”<sup>1739</sup> To do so would be to succumb to a kind of “tenacity” in a Peircean sense. This reflexive form of communication “requires that the participants intuitively (and counterfactually) distinguish between everyone’s (incompatible) beliefs and the assumed world-order itself.”<sup>1740</sup> As Habermas said:

Validity claims are in principle open to criticism because they are based on *formal world-concepts*. They presuppose a world that is identical for *all possible observers*, or a world intersubjectively shared *by all the members of a group* and they do so *in an abstract form freed of all specific content*.<sup>1741</sup>

The presupposition for Habermas was not a wholly mind-independent world of absolute Truth and reality so much as a world constituted *by* the participants in communication, a shared world that is available to all. It is a matter of “form,” however, rather than “content.” Without succumbing to the Kantian problem of a world-in-itself as a regulative ideal, Habermas’ world was intersubjectively constituted by the participants in dialogue but still managed to find a criteria for validity that didn’t lead to pure relativism: precisely because the world so constituted is presupposed to be immediate *to*, and identical *for, all possible observers*” there is thus a criterion to weed out subjective beliefs that diverge from that presupposed, common world. As Habermas said, “the function of the formal world-concepts...is to prevent the stock of what is common from dissolving in the stream of subjectivities...every action oriented to reaching

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<sup>1739</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>1740</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1741</sup> Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Op. Cit.*, 50 – 51.

understanding can be conceived as part of a cooperative process of interpretation aiming at situation definitions that are intersubjectively recognized.”<sup>1742</sup> As Lafont notes:

The presupposition of *a single objective world* is a built-in feature of the assertional practice oriented towards the validity claim “truth” – a practice constrained by the *binary* distinction true/false: if assertions are claims about how things are in the world and the world is one and the same for all of us, our beliefs about it can only be either true or false; and, for the very same reason, if someone else’s beliefs are true, one should believe them oneself.<sup>1743</sup>

Rather than postulating a mind-independent realm prior *to* discourse between parties and then coming up with a way to “mirror” that realm through consensus, the objective of inquiry arises from within discourse itself, which is Habermas’ position in contrast to LaFont’s. However, it must be the presupposition not of a variety of “reals” (as Dewey maintained) but a single objective world, agreed upon by all inquirers as a goal that arises within the sphere of discourse itself. Consensus thus has both an objective basis that isn’t susceptible to subjective whim or intractable antagonistic positions and, too, doesn’t postulate a mind-independent realm that requires a correspondence theory of truth to explain. This culminates in a theory of “unconstrained consensus.”<sup>1744</sup> As Habermas described it, from Peirce, “we term information scientific if and only if an uncompelled and permanent consensus can be obtained with regard to its validity.”<sup>1745</sup> This reading of Peirce is closely aligned with those scholars who maintain Peirce was *not* a metaphysical realist in the sense of postulating a wholly mind-independent realm that only a correspondence theory could access. Instead, as a type of phenomenological idealist,

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<sup>1742</sup> *Ibid.*, 69 – 70.

<sup>1743</sup> Lafont, “Is Objectivity Perspectival? Reflexions on Brandom’s and Habermas’s Pragmatist Conceptions of Objectivity,” *Op. Cit.*, 190.

<sup>1744</sup> Rockmore “The Epistemological Promise of Pragmatism,” *Op. Cit.*, 55.

<sup>1745</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 91.

“reality” is constituted through experience. For Habermas, however, precisely because Peirce’s language kept hedging him closer and closer to a correspondence theory (and many top scholars believe he did *in fact* maintain a correspondence theory), the unnecessary ontologizing of nature muddled an otherwise dynamic, intersubjective, communicative theory of truth.

As Habermas noted, the conclusion then, was that “reality can be considered not only from the transcendental point of view of the genesis of true statements; conversely the genesis of true statements can also be rendered comprehensible from the ontological point of view of a reality of universals existing in themselves.”<sup>1746</sup> According to Peirce’s adherence to Scholastic realism (as opposed to nominalism), Habermas’ account is quite correct.<sup>1747</sup>

The fact of scientific progress induces Peirce to define universal propositions exclusively in relation to the anticipated end of the process of inquiry as a whole and yet to assume at the same time that, in increasing measure, we objectively arrive at true statements even *before* the consummation of this process – despite subjective uncertainty about the truth value of every single one of these statements. If this is so, however, then we must be able per se to infer a universal matter of fact from a given, finite number of singular cases, although *for us* the validity of the procedure cannot be compelling but at best probable. Regarded from the perspective of the logic of inquiry, synthetic inferences must be possible.<sup>1748</sup>

Thus, as Habermas rightly said, “the universal exists not only as a concept of the knowing subject but in itself, and in such a manner that the concrete cases ‘in’ which it

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<sup>1746</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1747</sup> “Peirce’s realism...allowed for the possible reality of general classes...realists hold that not only are individual facts real, but so, in at least some cases, are the general kinds of classes or patterns of laws – universals – by which particular facts are conceived to be related to each other,” Hoopes, *Community Denied: The Wrong Turn of Pragmatic Liberalism*, *Op. Cit.*, 4.

<sup>1748</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 110.

exists ‘points’ to it.”<sup>1749</sup> However, Habermas then noted, “in contrast, the perspective of the logic of inquiry compels Peirce to adopt a concept of reality *derived* from the methodological concept of truth”<sup>1750</sup> which thus forced Peirce to “reconcile realism with the principles of a transcendental philosophy.”<sup>1751</sup>

In this way, Habermas’s critique becomes plain:

What [Peirce] actually does, however, once having taken the logic of inquiry as his point of departure, is detach from it a concept of reality limited by the logic of language and remain satisfied with the observation that reality is constituted under conditions of the grammatical form of universal propositions. On this presupposition, the metaphysical version of realism seems to be convertible into a metalinguistic one. But the limit of linguistic transcendentalism reveals itself, as indicated, in the element of immediate qualitative manifoldness, which, like that of facticity, first guarantees being’s independence from our interpretations.<sup>1752</sup>

To say that Peirce considered reality to be “constituted under conditions of the grammatical form of universal propositions” seems to oversimplify Peirce’s phenomenology and conflate what it means to make a statement with what it means to have a belief. As I’ve said, “beliefs” are more than simply what can be said of the world, though what we can say of the world is clearly an important facet of having a belief. True propositions were not forged by a disinterested spectator in a laboratory, for Peirce, they were forged of a full, phenomenological immersion where the different moments of experience can be parceled out for the sake of analysis but ultimately manifest in concert. There are “havings” and “knowings,” moments of mediation and moments of immediacy, all within a very dynamic transaction within a very wide conception of “experience.” In Thirdness, where we constitute “reality,” that constitution has incorporated into it

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<sup>1749</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>1750</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1751</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1752</sup> *Ibid.*

moments of both Firstness and Thirdness, the moments of “having” an experience of the world as it really is. “Reality,” so constituted, *includes* our experience of the world as it exists independently of our inquiries but is not, at the same time, wholly reducible *to* that independence. There is an externality that imposes itself upon inquiry (manifest most prominently in Secondness) that is experienced phenomenologically *as* tension, *as* resistance, for *us*. “Reality,” as Thirdness, takes the entire *event* of experience as a whole: the inquirer’s immediate and unproblematic immersion in the world, the external world experienced *as* tension or resistance, and the cognitive systematizing of those two phenomena into a holistic idea of “reality.” The very real externally existing world imposes itself quite against our will into our inquiries and plays a key role (but not an exhaustive role) in our conception of reality. For Peirce, this conception of reality neither *corresponded* with true statements nor did it exist as mere consensus wholly divorced from an external permanency.

For Habermas, however, according to his reading, Peirce was led *away* from realism and away from Kant, landing him in a form of “idealism that is not unlike Hegel’s.”<sup>1753</sup> Of course, this flies in the face of what Peirce intended.<sup>1754</sup> Habermas took this as a kind of vicious circularity, namely:

With the concept of reality derived from the logic of inquiry, Peirce already presupposes that the existence of anything independent of synthetic inferences is inconceivable...if we assume that reality is not

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<sup>1753</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1754</sup> “But now let us suppose the idealistic theory of reality, which I have in this paper taken for granted to be false. In that case, inductions would not be true unless the world were so constituted that every object should be presented in experience as often as any other; and further, unless we were so constituted that we had no more tendency to make bad inductions than good ones. These facts might be explained by the benevolence of the Creator; but, as has already been argued, they could not explain, but are absolutely refuted by the fact that no state of things can be conceived in which probable arguments should not lead to the truth. This affords a most important argument in favor of that theory of reality, and thus of those denials of certain faculties from which it was deduced, as well as of the general style of philosophizing by which those denials were reached,” Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.353.

constituted independently of the rules to which the process of inquiry is subject, then we cannot refer to this reality to justify the validity of the rules of the process of inquiry, that is the modes of inference.<sup>1755</sup>

Accordingly, Peirce adhered to the method of inquiry based on what appears to be no more than faith<sup>1756</sup> and the observational assumption that it's been working pretty well so far.<sup>1757</sup> But, as Habermas said, "this does not answer the question, 'What makes the facts usually to be, as inductive and hypothetical conclusions from true premises represent them to be?'"<sup>1758</sup> The problem, for Habermas, seemed to be: if reality is constituted through inquiry, it follows that we can't *use* reality to gauge whether or not our statements that comprise our constitution of reality are true. We thus lose any objective standard to judge our beliefs as true or false.

However, Peirce's categories *include* the "external"<sup>1759</sup> world rather than set the external world up from the start as something in-itself and unknowable. As Hoopes notes, "pragmatism had its origins in a new conception of what thinking is – an objective process of representation and interpretation in time and space rather than, as Descartes had thought, unmediated apprehension of the contents of the extended substance of mind."<sup>1760</sup> Indeed, "in Peirce's formulation even human thought is external in the sense

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<sup>1755</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 118.

<sup>1756</sup> "Only we know that, by faithfully adhering to that mode of inference, we shall, on the whole, approximate the truth," *Ibid.*, 116 and Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.354.

<sup>1757</sup> "What speaks for their validity is primarily no more – although no less – than the basic belief that until now there has been a cumulative learning process and that this process would necessarily lead to complete knowledge of reality if it were continued long enough in methodical fashion as a process of inquiry," Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 118.

<sup>1758</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1759</sup> Peirce's phenomenology "posits no occult substance of mind after the fashion of Descartes, and it leaves human thought and spirit at one with the rest of the natural world," Hoopes, *Community Denied: The Wrong Turn of Pragmatic Liberalism*, *Op. Cit.*, 179. Further, "Peirce's logic was premised on the notion that all thought has an objective element. Therefore, he believed that logic could be studied just as well, and probably better, by focusing not on our subjective experience of thinking but on objective symbols and the form of their relations to objects," *Ibid.*, 13 – 14.

<sup>1760</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.



that it is objective brain activity rather than the immaterial substance of mind described by Descartes.”<sup>1761</sup> Although we are limited to our phenomenological experience, for Peirce, that experience *includes* the totality of the objective world. If every facet of our experiences were immediate and certain, there’d be little need for abduction or induction at all.<sup>1762</sup> Tensions continue to emerge against a background of established beliefs and those tensions, refined communally through inquiry, constitute a more holistic and complete picture of reality. But, for Peirce, there was no lingering world-in-itself behind that phenomenological sphere precisely because the categories, themselves, include the world-as-it-is, though never in-itself apart from us. We are always already caught up in it (in Firstness), and this immediate correlation creates tensions (in Secondness) whenever our beliefs about reality (Thirdness) prove to be misguided and thus must be reformulated communally.

The problem for Habermas was that, on the one hand, “the logic of scientific inquiry cannot be justified purely in terms of its logical coherence. At the very least, this would suggest a paradoxical reversion to the *a priori* method, and the ultimate divorce of science from reality.”<sup>1763</sup> Coherence without correspondence results in a divorce from science and reality, reducing the latter to merely the consensus agreed upon by the former without an objective gauge to adjudicate their findings. “Yet, on the other hand, the logic of inquiry cannot be justified by a simple appeal to the real. If all experience of reality is mediated by prior beliefs (as Peirce argues), then the accuracy of a scientific hypothesis

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<sup>1761</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1762</sup> “Indeed, if such a naive empiricism were possible, there would be no need for abduction in the first place (for the nature of reality would be self-evident). Thus, for science to assume that there is a reality, and crucially a reality that is primarily experienced as the irritation of doubt – that which intrudes to destabilize an inadequate belief – entails that reality itself has a transcendental status. Reality is constituted in the process of inquiry,” Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas*, *Op. Cit.*, 70.

<sup>1763</sup> *Ibid.*

(let alone the abductive method that generated it) cannot be tested by an appeal to any immediate knowledge of the real.”<sup>1764</sup> Here, however, is the source of the confusion: while it’s true that all experience of reality is mediated by prior beliefs, not all *experience* is mediated (Firstness is immediate, and Secondness is an immediate experience of “shock” though mediated nominally by shock-as-opposed-to-Firstness). The external world, so construed in the language of mind/world dichotomies, is already packed into the mediated experiences that constitute Reality. So although it’s true our experience of reality is always mediated (thought-signs to other thought-signs, every Firstness is comprised of a previous Thirdness), the categories of phenomenological experience themselves already *include* that externality and do not operate as a barrier separating mind (the limits of the categories) and world (that which is outside the categories that they do not represent). As Edgar notes, according to Habermas’ critique of Peirce, “the real at once exists prior to inquiry and yet is only recognized and constituted through inquiry.”<sup>1765</sup>

Without seeing the externality latent within the phenomenological categories, there appears to be no objective gauge to constrain inquiry and thus the results of inquiry “remain contingent as a whole.”<sup>1766</sup> To avoid this unfortunate consequence, Habermas noted that Peirce went *beyond* his intended purpose of constructing a theory of meaning “but rather the central question of a logic of inquiry that is guided by reflection on the basic experience of positivism: *how is scientific progress possible?* Pragmatism answers this question by legitimating the validity of synthetic modes of inference on the basis of

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<sup>1764</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1765</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>1766</sup> *Ibid.*

the transcendental structure of instrumental action,”<sup>1767</sup> thus re-raising Horkheimer’s two-fold critique that pragmatism was little more than an extension of (a) positivism and (b) instrumental rationality. The refinement of beliefs for Peirce, Habermas maintained, revolved around “a system of reference of possible *feedback-controlled action*”<sup>1768</sup> wherein beliefs are tested experimentally to ascertain their veracity in “*objective life context* in which the process of inquiry fulfills specifiable functions: the settlement of opinions, the elimination of uncertainties, and the acquisition of unproblematic beliefs – in short, the fixation of belief.”<sup>1769</sup> The instrumental context is that “the meaning of the validity of statements is determined with reference to possible technical control of the connection of empirical variables” as they manifest the “universal relations represented in signs.”<sup>1770</sup> Thus, “instrumental action” implies the conditions of validity for “inference” itself.<sup>1771</sup> Ultimately, we must “understand instrumental action as the control of the external conditions of existence, which can be acquired and exercised only under the conditions of a *cumulative learning process*.”<sup>1772</sup> This is the heart of Habermas’ reading of Peirce as a transcendental philosopher<sup>1773</sup> in so far as the “transcendental grounding to knowledge...lies in labour understood as a behavioural circuit of feedback-controlled action” which “makes possible a certain form of knowledge of the world.”<sup>1774</sup>

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<sup>1767</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 121.

<sup>1768</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1769</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>1770</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>1771</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1772</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>1773</sup> “If...the fact of scientific progress cannot seriously be denied, then it can be explained only by the verifying power of the inductive confirmation of hypotheses. The validity of induction can...be justified only through their metalogical connection with deduction, which is posited with the behavioral system of instrumental action as a transcendental framework for the possible stabilization of habits of behavior and the possible extension of technically exploitable knowledge,” *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>1774</sup> Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas*, *Op. Cit.*, 69.

Habermas offered an alternative reading of what would have been more reasonable given Peirce's own project:

If Peirce had considered advocating this solution of the problem of universals in terms of the logic of inquiry, he would have had to differentiate in the concept of reality between, on the one hand, what is in fact independent of cumulative learning processes and a human world constituted by technical controllability and, on the other, what we catch 'of' this reality as soon as it enters our world and becomes the correlate of true statements about reality. Marx had a conception of this difference, and Heidegger, elaborating on the work of Husserl, has explicitly formulated it: the difference between beings and Being. If the concept of reality derived from the logic of inquiry were to be developed in a pragmatistic direction, it would have to comprehend this difference. Peirce, however, limits himself to a concept of reality that is exhausted in being the correlate of all possible true statements.<sup>1775</sup>

By conflating what Habermas saw as two distinct strands (the logic of inquiry and the logic of language), Peirce ultimately reduced the terms of "reality" to the latter,<sup>1776</sup> thereby culminating in a conception of reality that was little more than the "correlate of all possible true statements" which are, in turn, forged of experiment and technical control over reality as it *presents* itself *only* as a problem that must be solved. The totality of reason becomes, ultimately, instrumental precisely because there is no sense of reality as anything beyond or behind the confines of this object-as-problem and no language to describe it other than the language of technical control. Precisely because of this apparent paradox wherein reality is both constituted *by* inquiry, and exists *prior to* inquiry, Habermas seeks to disambiguate Peirce's position by distinguishing "the issue of the constitution of reality from that of the truth of scientific propositions about that

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<sup>1775</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 131.

<sup>1776</sup> "The limitation of the concept of reality shows that Peirce indeed did not pursue his pragmatistic approach along the lines of a transcendental logic of inquiry and develop it consistently. Instead he reverts to ontologizing by interpreting what is in principle a question of the logic of inquiry as one of the logic of language," *Ibid.*, 131 – 132.

reality.”<sup>1777</sup> Thus, “on the one hand the real is relative to the current state of science or, more precisely, to the current capacity to engage instrumentally with nature. On the other hand, reality is ‘the totality of true propositions.’”<sup>1778</sup> Precisely because knowledge of the world increases through belief refinement, and beliefs are, themselves, “necessarily linguistic,” it follows that “to assert that an experience is always mediated by prior beliefs is also to assert that experience is always mediated by language. Reality is therefore constituted in language,”<sup>1779</sup> with “reality” meaning, here, the sum-total of all true statements.

Even if it is possible to recognize that a given hypothesis is false, then it is still not possible to guarantee that any substituted hypothesis is any closer to being one of the totality of true propositions that will be achieved at the end of scientific inquiry. This is due to the fact that if there is no access to reality independent of language and belief, then there are no independent criteria by which to assess the progress of science.<sup>1780</sup>

This problem led Habermas to criticize Peirce through the Nietzschean conception of “perspectivism.” If Peirce failed to account for a *singular*, objective reality, then what is to say that there isn’t a multiplicity of perspectives that amount to little more than “a plurality of fictions relative to multiple standpoints”<sup>1781</sup>? Habermas *wanted* to side with Peirce, specifically, “his commitment to the transcendental implications of the ‘hypothesis of reality.’ Such a disciplining ‘reality,’ articulated through labour, would serve to ground our intuitive notion that science does progress rather than merely change.”<sup>1782</sup> Further, if “perspectivism” is all that’s left of Peirce’s doctrine, then the roll

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<sup>1777</sup> Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas*, *Op. Cit.*, 71.

<sup>1778</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1779</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1780</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>1781</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 118.

<sup>1782</sup> Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas*, *Op. Cit.*, 72.

of pragmatism is reduced to its bare instrumental form: that *is* pragmatism's "perspective," namely, "facilitating human survival."<sup>1783</sup> As Edgar summarizes, "at worst, this is a biological claim: in effect, that what passes for knowledge is wholly relative to the biological needs of the human species. At best, it is a sociological thesis: what a community recognizes as knowledge is shaped by the particular survival needs of that community."<sup>1784</sup> This devolves into a sort of "decisionism"<sup>1785</sup> which resonates with the concerns of the Frankfurt School: the needs of a community, what it needs to "survive," may be dictated by the needs of a power interest. Ultimately, such decisionism would be indistinguishable from the "authority" Peirce abhorred. Habermas attempted to establish some form of transcendental framework for Peirce's method that eschewed any potential for it to devolve into decisionism.

We can only conjecture why Peirce accedes to a concealed positivism and treats the pragmatist criterion of meaning in such an absolutistic manner that it destroys the foundation of pragmatism itself. Had Peirce taken seriously the communication of investigators as a transcendental subject forming itself under empirical conditions, then pragmatism would have been compelled to a self-reflection that overstepped its own boundaries. In continuing his analysis, Peirce would have had to come upon the fact that *ground of intersubjectivity* in which investigators are always already situated when they attempt to bring about consensus about metatheoretical problems is not the ground of purposive-rational action, which is in principle solitary.<sup>1786</sup>

Habermas' concern was that, given his reading of Peirce, pragmatism limits itself to purposive-rational action and technical control of the environment that was, as he noted, in principle solitary. Had Peirce taken seriously the communication of the investigators within his community of inquirers, he'd have noted that human interests are not as

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<sup>1783</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1784</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1785</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1786</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 137.

“absolutistic” and single-minded as the parameters that Habermas believed pragmatism has set upon itself. Habermas was quite right that Peirce noted that the ground of intersubjectivity is one upon which all investigators are already situated, but Habermas limited their motivational spectrum. By limiting the parameters of pragmatism to instrumentalism, Habermas noted that since the goals are all, in principle, solitary (survival, the dissolution of doubts, technical control of *my* environment, etc.) it dissolved intersubjective dialogue entirely. Because “subjects acting instrumentally make use of representational signs, and the technical rules that can be sedimented as habits must be capable of formulation in statements about relations of events,” the logical determinations that expand our knowledge (deduction, abduction, and induction) “establish relations between statements that are in principle monologic. It is possible to think in syllogisms, but not to conduct a dialogue in them. I can use syllogistic reasoning to yield arguments for a discussion, but I cannot argue syllogistically with an other.”<sup>1787</sup> If Peirce limited the parameters of knowledge acquisition to the deployment of the logical coordinations of syllogisms, there can *be* no ground of intersubjectivity beyond the nominal sense of comparing and contrasting syllogisms. Thus:

Insofar as the employment of symbols is constitutive for the behavioral system of instrumental action, the use of language involved is monologic. But the communication of investigators requires the use of language that is not confined to the limits of technical control over objectified natural processes. It arises from symbolic interaction between societal subjects who reciprocally know and recognize each other as unmistakable individuals. This *communicative action* is a system of reference that cannot be reduced to the framework of *instrumental action*.<sup>1788</sup>

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<sup>1787</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>1788</sup> *Ibid.*

Inquiry *itself*, if it is to be authentically intersubjective and dialogic, must use *more* than the syllogistic language of logic. As he said, individuals do not communicate in syllogisms. Thus, in order to justify his emphasis on consensus and a community of inquirers, Peirce would have had to establish a type of “communicative” rather than merely “instrumental” framework to explain how his method of inquiry operates intersubjectively at all. Ultimately, as Habermas concluded, despite Peirce’s abhorrence to atomic individualism, Cartesian solipsism, and the method of tenacity, he provided no solid ground upon which we can justify inquiry’s progress by means of consensus and communication.<sup>1789</sup>

For Peirce, it was true that abduction and induction (which may be rendered syllogistically) are the means by which knowledge increased.<sup>1790</sup> The problem that

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<sup>1789</sup> “Inquiry understood as a relationship of deduction, induction and abduction remains monological, which is to say, a process that could occur in the head of a lone inquirer,” Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas*, *Op. Cit.*, 73.

<sup>1790</sup> The process by which thought grew was, for Peirce, an issue of abduction and induction. Abduction is the only deployment of reason “that can introduce a new idea, or use a past idea in a new context” (Gabriele Gava, “The Purposefulness of Our Thought: A Kantian Aid to Understanding Some Essential Features of Peirce.” In “A Symposium on James Good’s ‘A Search for Unity in Diversity,’” special issue, *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 44, no. 4, [Fall, 2008]: 699 – 727, 706). “Abduction,” Peirce says, “is merely preparatory” (Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.218) It “makes its start from the facts, without, at the outset, having any particular theory in view, though it is motivated by the feeling that a theory is needed to explain the surprising facts” (Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.218) It “seeks a theory” wherein “facts suggest the hypothesis” by means of “*resemblance*,” namely, “the resemblance of the facts to the consequences of the hypothesis” (Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.218). Although both abduction *and* induction “lead to the acceptance of a hypothesis because observed facts are such as would necessarily or probably result as consequences of that hypothesis” (Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.218) “induction” is actually at the opposite pole of reason. Whereas abduction makes it start from the facts, “induction makes its start from a hypothesis which seems to recommend itself, without at the outset having any particular facts in view, though it feels the need of facts to support the theory” (Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.218) Whereas abduction seeks a theory, “induction seeks for facts” (Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.218) and thus “suggests the experiments which bring to light the very facts to which the hypothesis had pointed” (Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.218) Whereas in abduction, the facts suggest the hypothesis through *resemblance* of the facts to the consequences of the hypothesis, induction suggests the facts by means of “*contiguity*,” namely, “familiar knowledge that the conditions of the hypothesis can be realized in certain experimental ways” (Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 7.218). Both abduction and induction are demonstrable deployments of human reason and work together to form Peirce’s method of inquiry in the context of purposefulness and the drive to orient ourselves to an end. Abduction takes the disparate facts of experience and seeks a unifying theory to make sense of those experiences in a large context. Induction takes the theory generated by abduction and seeks to find facts that correlate with the hypothesis suggested.



Habermas presented is that Peirce seemed to suggest that Truth was both determined intersubjectively yet, too, that knowledge grows syllogistically. We can, as Habermas said, demonstrate our syllogistic reasoning to our fellows, but ultimately those shared syllogisms must be verified *individually*, i.e., subjectively on the basis of validity claims. In short, Peirce either failed to account for how intersubjectivity *actually* contributed to consensus and knowledge growth, or else he ought to abandon his position that intersubjectivity, beyond the nominal sense of sharing syllogisms (i.e., experimental data and theories), contributes in any meaningful way to Peirce's theory of inquiry.

For example, if I have a belief, I establish it in terms of a syllogism and place it on the proverbial table of communal verification. Another inquirer "picks up" that belief off the proverbial table, analyzes it, and either confirms it or denies it by presenting an alternative belief for me to then pick up off the table and so forth. The two individuals don't ever communicate directly or immediately, "with each other" in a sense, as all interpersonal communication is mediating by this proverbial table of communal verification. If we view the problem through King's definition of "monologue" (as opposed to "dialogue"), it's clear that the former represents a kind of Peircean method of tenacity wherein each party clings tenaciously to their respective beliefs and turns away from the beliefs of the Other. Alternatively, it may be an example of the *a priori* method wherein each party (like empiricists and rationalists) rest certain on fundamental principles, themselves unquestioned and not forged of experience, and consequently can never meet, dialogically, on common ground. What Peirce offered, instead, was a method that was inherently communicative and dialogical and even though abductive, inductive, and deductive deployments of logic in knowledge growth *may* be rendered syllogistically,

they rarely *are* so rendered in common conversation, though nevertheless underlie our discourse (if our discourse is to be sensible at all).

“On the contrary,” Habermas said, “every dialogue develops on an entirely different basis, namely that of the reciprocal recognition of subjects who identify one another under the category of selfhood (*Ichheit*) and at the same time maintain themselves in their non-identity.”<sup>1791</sup> As Habermas said, “the concept of the individual ego includes a *dialectical relation of the universal and the particular*, which cannot be conceived in the behavioral system of instrumental action.”<sup>1792</sup> The system of instrumental action, for Habermas, was borne out in technical control where “otherness” is seen as antagonistic, oppositional, and, in a sense, pure negation. Viewing the individual ego in such a manner denigrates the individual’s selfhood and non-identity to yet one more facet of technical control, either through having to “overcome” the individual as “problem” or else to use the collective sum of other individuals to create the communal beliefs that are, for Habermas, ultimately verified by their reproducibility by each, singular individual. Indeed, with his reading, it is hard to see *how* such communal beliefs could be forged to begin with *if* they are forged of dialogue that can’t even get off the ground if the ego is viewed through instrumental action.

In order to ground the method of inquiry, and save it from decisionism, Habermas claimed that there *must* be an objective component to inquiry, one that is *not* reducible to mediated sign relations.<sup>1793</sup> As Edgar notes, “it is through experience, and not least

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<sup>1791</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 137.

<sup>1792</sup> *Ibid.*, 138 – 139.

<sup>1793</sup> “Reflection on the community of investigators, through whose communication scientific progress is realized from the transcendental point of view of possible technical control, would necessarily burst the pragmatist framework. Precisely this self-reflection would have to show that the subject of the process of inquiry forms itself on the foundation of an intersubjectivity that as such extends beyond the transcendental framework of instrumental action. In the dialogic clarification of metatheoretical problems, the

experience that is literally incomprehensible – that cannot be meaningfully articulated – that the ‘immediate quality of reality’ asserts itself. As such it is the source of challenges to the publicly accepted interpretation of reality.”<sup>1794</sup> As Edgar notes:

Human beings come to share an understanding of reality only in so far as their engagement with reality is mediated by concrete intersubjective relationships to each other. An understanding and justification of scientific progress lies, therefore, in the explication not of an ahistorical logic, but rather of the forms of open and critical debate that allow knowledge claims to acquire genuine, universal acceptability.<sup>1795</sup>

However, Peirce’s social individualism is not merely the awareness of being out of step and a drive to re-assimilate (this would be more in keeping with the method of authority), but, rather, a semiotic individualism wherein the inquirer is intimately connected with every other inquirer as well as the language used in inquiry and the objects discussed in inquiry, so much so that “atomic” individualism can be nothing but a chimera. Our “intersubjective relationships” with one another are how we come to know ourselves, each other, and our world such that our experience *of* ourselves, each other, and our world is, itself, mediated by our intersubjective relationships with others.

Peirce first establishes a general sign theory in which the value of any given sign is its place in a general semiotic process. Communication presupposes the existence of semiosis. As Peirce put it, to interpret his general sign theory as a theory of communication between senders and receivers was “a sop to Cerberus” that obscured his contention that a general theory of signs constructed the very parameters of communication, including the participant.<sup>1796</sup>

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communication of investigators avails itself of a mode of knowledge linked to the framework of symbolic interaction. This cognitive mode is presupposed in the acquisition of technically exploitable knowledge (Wissen) but cannot itself be justified in terms of the latter’s categories,” *Ibid*, 139.

<sup>1794</sup> Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas*, *Op. Cit.*, 74.

<sup>1795</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>1796</sup> Benjamin Lee, “Textuality, Mediation, and Public Discourse,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996), 411.

Further, precisely because of his critique of the faux “consensus” and faux “community” inherent in the method of authority, Peirce was alive to the possibility of using the scientific method as a *critical* method.

Peirce recognizes that universal agreement can be – and frequently is – brought about, not by open and rational consideration of evidence, but through violence: ‘a general massacre of all who have not thought in a certain way’ (Peirce 1960: 5.378). Reality and the collective subject that constitutes it may thus be allowed to have complex and contingent histories. However, within that flawed history there may be glimpsed in the discursive practices of that community an ideal against which history can be judged.<sup>1797</sup>

In a manner not overly dissimilar from Marcuse’s conception of “negative thinking,” there is a hint, nascent in Peirce’s requirement of how Truth is achieved, of an *ideal* community of inquirers that may be used as the hypothetical template against which to measure deviations *from* that ideal, namely, the types of totalitarian formulations of community that dissolve freedom of inquiry and democratic intersubjectivity. It is from the “higher perspective,” as Marcuse might say, of this ideal community against which the “flawed” history of a current milieu is illuminated and brought forth from the obfuscating structures of its proliferated beliefs. In part, as Edgar suggests, this realization of the tension between “what is” (the community as it exists) and “what is *not*” (an ideal community) “may be glimpsed in the discursive practices of that community” in the present. As I have argued before, the tension that arises from the realization that one’s community is anything but “ideal” is created by those individuals with a wider sort of social feeling which I have equated with critical theorists engaged in negative thinking. Labour alone, especially framed against the problem of the method of authority, cannot be the *only* transcendental conditions for the possibility of knowledge. It

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<sup>1797</sup> Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas*, Op. Cit., 74.

must be *mutually* framed along with a socio-political agenda designed, specifically, for a superlative form of egalitarian democracy and freedom for inquiry to flourish at all. As Edgar notes:

In sum, in the notion of the community of scientists, Peirce has begun to recognize that labour alone cannot be the only transcendental condition of (even natural scientific) knowledge. If it were, Nietzsche would be right. Labour would entail nothing more than the empirical grounding of scientific knowledge in the capacities of the human species. Labour must be complemented by interaction as at least a first step in justifying transcendentalism (KHI: 138).<sup>1798</sup>

As Rockmore notes, “Habermas regards Peirce as the first to see that knowledge relies on uncompelled and permanent consensus in the form of an ultimate answer to every scientific question.”<sup>1799</sup> Though Peirce admonished any *social* constraints of inquiry in the form of authority or capitalistic motivations, there *is* a kind of constraint that operates to blockade inquiry from going in any which way it wants, namely, the constraint of “Secondness,” the aspect of experience that determines “true” from “false” beliefs by sending false ones spiraling off from the consequences we expect in those particular guiding principles. “Existence,” in this sense, *will* block the way of inquiry, but only in the nominal sense that it will stop us from tenaciously clinging to false beliefs in the long run and, thus, has a productive role in inquiry itself. Further, as we’ve explored exhaustively throughout this project, all “true beliefs” are always only provisional in light

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<sup>1798</sup> *Ibid.*, 74 – 75.

<sup>1799</sup> Rockmore, “The Epistemological Promise of Pragmatism,” *Op. Cit.*, 56. I would make a slight amendment to Rockmore’s point here: although the ideal end of inquiry, Truth, is both uncompelled and permanent in the sense that it is beyond the possibility of further doubt and revision, “knowledge” is not dependent on the actual arrival at Truth. Peirce’s fallibilism situated him between the skeptic and the dogmatist who both agree that knowledge claims require apodictic certainty (though the former maintained that such certainty was never possible). For Peirce, we can make knowledge claims along the way to Truth, though this knowledge is not yet (and possibly will not ever be) absolutely complete and certain, as his example of working out “ $\pi$ ” was meant to illustrate: although we don’t know  $\pi$  to every possible decimal place, the belief that  $\pi = 3.1415$  is a “true belief” and qualifies as a knowledge claim.

of the long run, thus “always open to change,” and approximated indefinitely. “Consensus,” as I have argued, does not *create* reality, nor is it, alone, the full demonstration of “Truth.” Consensus, as Rockmore rightly notes, is “compelled by experience,” that is, is created through a coordination of intersubjective discourse that, over time, better approximates the way the world actually *is*. Experience creates consensus and consensus, then, is a good indication that, to the best of our current efforts, provisionally, we have arrived at a fairly certain “true belief,” though, of course, never (or, ideally, “not yet”) absolutely True. In this limited sense, we *can*, for Peirce, distinguish between, as Habermas said, “true and false propositions,” though he quite rightly says we *cannot* do so “definitively.” As Rockmore notes, for Peirce, “truth and consensus are independent concepts,” though, of course, intimately related, nevertheless, “one cannot infer from consensus, even unrestrained consensus, to truth.”<sup>1800</sup> Consensus operates as an *indicator*, rather than a guarantee, that Truth has, to a relative degree, been attained. Truth, however, does not depend on consensus but on reality as a “limiting concept,” in Rockmore’s terms, the resistance of reality bearing down upon our inquiries and guiding us through inquiry in the long run. The ultimate difference between Habermas and Peircean pragmatism, Rockmore summarizes, is this: “both hold that we cannot directly know mind-independent reality. The former claims that we can, however, know it indirectly through unconstrained consensus, hence attain truth as described in theories of truth. The latter maintains that we have knowledge based on intersubjective agreement, but not truth.”<sup>1801</sup> The knowledge based on intersubjective agreement, the Peircean consensus, warrants “true beliefs” but not Truth-in-itself, absolute and reflective

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<sup>1800</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>1801</sup> *Ibid.*

of objective, mind-independent reality. Reality persists as a limiting condition, a guiding principle, that determines true from false beliefs in this specific sense. I would amend Rockmore's distinction only slightly by adding "yet" at the end of his account of Peircean pragmatism: "we have knowledge based on intersubjective agreement, but not truth" *yet*. Indeed, in defense of Habermas, he admitted as much, noting, "the genuine achievement of modern science does not consist primarily in producing true, that is correct and cogent statements about what we call reality. Rather, it distinguishes itself from traditional categories of knowledge by a method of arriving at an uncompelled and permanent consensus of this sort about our views."<sup>1802</sup> Again, "uncompelled" in a social or discursive, but "compelled," at least, by the resistance of reality. Ultimately (and Peirce was quite explicit here), the intersubjective agreement *would* culminate in Truth at the end of the long run. Before we get to this ambiguously achievable goal, however, in the interim, in the here and now, what we have is knowledge, not Truth, in an absolute sense.

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<sup>1802</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *Op. Cit.*, 91.

## Conclusion

### Towards a Critical Pragmatism

In attempting to reconcile American pragmatism with German critical theory, it may seem an odd choice to turn to Peirce rather than Dewey.<sup>1803</sup> On the one hand, Dewey did not share Peirce's qualms about applying the pragmatic methodology to issues of contemporary socio-political import, having done so frequently and eloquently, and his rocky relationship with capitalism is well documented. On the other hand, Peirce, to be charitable, was not a paragon of virtue or tolerance, despite his explicit claims to the contrary. As Hoopes notes in his intellectual history of Peirce, the father of pragmatism and advocate of the radically egalitarian method of inquiry, was sympathetic to the anti-abolitionist movement, complete with several overt examples of racial intolerance.<sup>1804</sup>

Perhaps the greatest success of any hypothesis is the moment it reveals the shortcomings of its own progenitor. That Peirce, in some aspects of his life, failed to adhere to his own method (succumbing, perhaps, to one or several of the counterproductive methods of belief formation), in no way undermines the method itself. Far from it, I argue, for such a revelation in turn may reveal the efficacy of the method in a manner more honest and explicit than any example Peirce, himself, could conjure. It is

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<sup>1803</sup> James Hoopes asked the same question and came to the same conclusion I will argue in this chapter: "I sympathize greatly with the hope of these other liberal historians to find a usable past on which to rebuild liberal ideals, but I do not believe that Dewey is the right foundation on which to build...there was another pragmatic philosopher – Charles Sanders Peirce – who offered a sounder basis for the liberal dream that Dewey did or does," James Hoopes, *Community Denied: The Wrong Turn of Pragmatic Liberalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 2.

<sup>1804</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 – 19.



important to be aware of this facet of Peirce's life rather than ignore it, or else what are we but more ostriches choosing to bury our heads in the proverbial sand? The very fact that we may use Peirce's own method to critique Peirce himself on this very issue stands as testament to the enduring quality and efficacy of Peirce's work: in essence, the method transcends the man.

And it is the *method* that resonates so profoundly with the goals of the critical theorists, especially those of Herbert Marcuse, whom we have focused on here. It is a method that is hyperbolically inclusive and radically egalitarian, one that defies authority and demands free and uninhibited dialogue and solidarity. It is a method that denies capitalism the right to dictate the trajectory of inquiry and put a commoditized value on philosophy's quest for Truth. Though both James and Dewey utilized Peirce's method of inquiry, Peirce's version was by far the most radical and the most useful for constructing a socio-political philosophy precisely because, unlike James or Dewey, Peirce was a *realist* and an *objectivist* and shared none of his successors flirtations with nominalism and subjectivism. Indeed, "where Peirce's pragmatism was strong and objective, theirs was weak" and "was at least partially subjective."<sup>1805</sup> "Society" was not a mere word bandied about. For Peirce, it was absolutely real,<sup>1806</sup> an organism in its own right,<sup>1807</sup> and such a conception allowed Peirce, far more than any other pragmatist hence,<sup>1808</sup> to not

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<sup>1805</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>1806</sup> Peirce, inspired by Scotus, was a "realist" in terms of his wholesale rejection of nominalism: "'humanity' is, as the nominalists say, only a name, not a reality," *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>1807</sup> "The second thing to remember is that the man's circle of society (however widely or narrowly this phrase may be understood), is a sort of loosely compacted person, in some respects of higher rank than the person of an individual organism," Charles S. Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, 8 Volumes (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931 – 1936), CP 5.421.

<sup>1808</sup> "James and Dewey were less communitarian philosophers than Peirce because of their tendency, admittedly less strong in Dewey than in James, toward a metaphysical position that made it difficult to

only explain the relationship between individuals and their society succinctly, but to ground that explanation in a precise metaphysics.<sup>1809</sup> For “although Dewey knew that communication was vital to society, he did not elaborate his metaphysics in sufficient detail to offer a foundation for a well-developed theory of communication.”<sup>1810</sup> It was Peirce’s “detailed theory of communication [which] surpassed the philosophy of both James and Dewey in its potential usefulness to political theory, a potential almost totally unexploited,”<sup>1811</sup> due in no small part to Peirce’s insistence on an objective, realistic component to his philosophical system. Whereas nominalists “believed that the individual was real in a way that society was not, a view that made it difficult to recognize the reality of community or shared spirit,”<sup>1812</sup> Peirce’s hyperbolic social individualism was based on a conception of society as an organism in its own right, as we’ve seen, every bit as real<sup>1813</sup> as the individuals that comprise it.<sup>1814</sup> “Peirce’s philosophy, far more than James’s and Dewey’s, makes it possible to see that our relation to society has some of the same kind of integration, some of the same kind of reality, as do the relations within us that constitute our individual minds and selves.”<sup>1815</sup> Indeed, “society, according to Peirce, has some of the same reality as does the individual.”<sup>1816</sup> If such a correlation holds, it follows that society is deserving of some semblance of the

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conceive of society as anything more than a mass of atomistic individuals,” Hoopes, *Community Denied: The Wrong Turn of Pragmatic Liberalism*, *Op. Cit.*, 4.

<sup>1809</sup> “There were real and specific differences in logic and metaphysics between Peirce on the one hand and James and Dewey on the other,” *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>1810</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>1811</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>1812</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1813</sup> For Peirce, as a realist in this specific sense, “society may be just as real as individual human beings,” *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>1814</sup> “Peirce’s realism...allowed for the possible reality of general classes, such as ‘horse’ or ‘humanity,’” *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>1815</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>1816</sup> *Ibid.*

same moral consideration as do the individuals that comprise it, some of the “same claims on our resources as do our individual selves.”<sup>1817</sup>

Further, despite Habermas’ concerns to the contrary, Peirce’s realism and objectivism likewise provides the most robust and dynamic articulation of the possibility of genuine dialogical engagement of any of the pragmatists. As Hoopes notes, Peirce’s “metaphysics was communitarian, for it argued that logical relations were real constituents of the universe and thus ensured not only the possibility of human understanding of nature but also the possibility of communication among human beings. Human thought could fathom the natural world because thought is natural.”<sup>1818</sup>

The resonance between Peirce and Marcuse, as I’ve illuminated, is particularly illustrative of the potential reconciliation between American pragmatism and German critical theory. Both Peirce and Marcuse maintained a Utopian vision, explicitly in Marcuse and nascently in Peirce<sup>1819</sup> as a necessary corollary to his prescribed scientific method.<sup>1820</sup> Further, as I have argued, the individuals with a “wider sort of social feeling”<sup>1821</sup> that arise out of the method of authority to critique and challenge the legitimacy of those proliferated beliefs are engaged in precisely the sort of “negative thinking” ubiquitously championed by Marcuse throughout his canon. Indeed, I argue that the individuals Peirce admires in those key passages are, themselves, critical theorists of a profoundly Marcusean idiom.

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<sup>1817</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1818</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>1819</sup> As Brent notes, in Peirce’s earliest work, “there was an element of the utopian... that if ordinary people were taught logic, they would thereafter behave more in tune with reality,” Joseph Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 52.

<sup>1820</sup> For only in a radically free and egalitarian democracy, freed from the ingression of capitalistic values into inquiry and freed from any and all authoritarian control, can inquiry truly flourish.

<sup>1821</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.381.

However, one more problem emerges: the problem of “pluralism.” Pluralism, according to Talisse, “is the thesis that at least some, and perhaps many, disagreements over Big Questions are inevitable, irresolvable, non-contingent, and permanent. In other words, the pluralist denies that when such disagreement endures it is necessarily because some of us are misinformed, obstinate, irrational, or wicked.”<sup>1822</sup> Talisse explores why Dewey, despite his application of pragmatism to democratic concerns, ultimately came up short in offering a robust pluralism that I unfortunately can’t engage here.<sup>1823</sup> It would seem, at first glance, that precisely *because* of the objectivism and realism in Peirce, there’s an even more diminished likelihood that Peirce could forward a robust pluralism. If the goal of inquiry is a unified, “ultimate opinion” shared by *all* inquirers, what possibility is there for mutually compatible, but ultimate distinct, belief-systems and ideologies living side by side in a single nation?<sup>1824</sup>

It is important to remember that Peirce prescribed no beliefs, ideologies, nor truths in his manifestation of pragmatism. To *prescribe* a belief would be little more than succumbing to the *a priori* method of belief formation or, in its proliferation to others, assuming the position of authority. What Talisse calls “epistemic pluralism,” Peirce’s pragmatism did not adjudicate as to the answers to any of the “Big Questions” precisely because those inquiries are still ongoing. What he *did* provide, however, was a hyperbolically inclusive method by which those Big Questions may be engaged by the widest breadth of inquirers imaginable. Further, although “Truth” may exist down the

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<sup>1822</sup> Robert Talisse, *A Pragmatist Philosophy of Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 34.

<sup>1823</sup> See Talisse, *A Pragmatist Philosophy of Democracy*, chapter 2.

<sup>1824</sup> A search for a Peircean pluralism would eventually stumble into the “seeming bedrock of his position: his claims of the convergence toward the final ultimate opinion of the community of interpreters in the idealized long run,” Sandra B. Rosenthal, *Charles Peirce’s Pragmatic Pluralism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), ix.

long run of inquiry, a unified opinion that all are destined to share, precisely because this “Truth” has not yet *been* achieved, and may well never *be* achieved apodictically, in the here and now Peirce’s pragmatism not only allows for pluralism but *demand*s it as the only way by which these distinct beliefs may encounter one another in authentic dialogue. If some beliefs should prove more conducive to democratic values than others, that is a consequence *of* inquiry, not something assumed from its start. Precisely because the Truth will only ever hypothetically be achieved somewhere down the long run of inquiry’s unfolding, *until* that destined moment, by his first rule of reason, no blockade of inquiry is permitted and thus pluralism may flourish far more fully than a Deweyan manifestation of pragmatism wherein democratic ideals, benevolent as they may be, are prescribed from the get-go.

Throughout his career, Marcuse turned to a variety of different potential solutions to the problem of capitalistic indoctrination, distinct yet mutually complementary. In his Freudian-Marxism, he saw potential in the endurance of the pleasure principle within the reality principle, aching for a release made increasingly possible with the diminishing of scarcity. In his analysis of negative thinking, he saw potential in the university system and dialectical philosophies that championed the “constructive tension” of a Socratic-cum-Kingian “gadfly” that could illuminate the contingency of the current milieu from higher perspectives. So, too, did he see potential in the radically disenfranchised, those that *could* not participate in the indoctrinating milieu.

Peirce, too, adamantly rejected any form of authority that would dictate beliefs *for* a populace, chief among them were capitalistically motivated beliefs that altered the trajectory of inquiry in the classroom, in the laboratory, and in the everyday walks of life.

I argue that Peirce's critique of the method of authority and the ways in which the authoritarian structure is capable of indoctrinating its citizens into passivity is perfectly compatible with Marcuse's critique of one-dimensional society though the latter digs deeper into the specific mechanisms of indoctrination than the former ever did, an excavation that would only increase the veracity of Peirce's critique.

Whereas Marcuse framed the indoctrination of capitalism on the level of instinct and the implantation (and subsequent fulfillment) of false "needs," Peirce framed it as the manipulation of *beliefs*. Beliefs were forged, for Peirce, within a cultural milieu and manifested as habits of conduct.

Contrary to critiques against him, Peirce was in no way an instrumentalist in the manner Horkheimer (and others) have accused him of being. As Sheriff notes:

The human predicament, the situation of human intelligence, the conditions of our use of signs as Charles S. Peirce perceived them are as follows: truth is in the future, but in our consciousness we cannot help but assent to what we perceive to be the case in the particular contexts and language games within which we live.<sup>1825</sup>

Our social context, and the language games we play within that context, are conditioned, for Marcuse, predominantly (though not exclusively) through the language and mores of commodity capitalism. Though there are sites of disruption in the form of the co-opting of linguistic terms and concepts, the counterrevolution of the Establishment attempts at every turn to engage the type of artificial desublimation that reduces any revolutionary movement to the terms of capitalism. Our assent, for Peirce, is certainly conditioned in no small part by our participation in the mores of society: instrumentally, we adapt, as organisms, to a social environment conditioned by the Establishment. But this is not the

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<sup>1825</sup> John K. Sheriff, *Charles Peirce's Guess at the Riddle: Grounds for Human Significance* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), xvii.

end of the story: for Peirce, the Truth, as Sheriff rightly notes, is ever in the future. This is precisely the reason why Peircean pragmatism is not reducible to instrumentalism or positivism. As Brent notes, Peirce was inspired by Schiller's conception of *Spieltrieb*, "what Peirce later called 'the play of Musement,' a phrase which became for him a synonym, after 1900, for hypothesis in the sense of a description of its activity."<sup>1826</sup> There is the perpetual prescription of negative thinking: his fallibilism in conjunction with his first rule of reason and his critique of the method of authority combine to create an epistemic commandment to never rest on one's proverbial laurels, that all beliefs, even the most sanctified by authority, are open to revision as we move towards a Truth that, by its nature, can never be captured within a single cultural milieu. Negative thinking, in short, is the linchpin of Peirce's pragmatism.

Marcuse did exemplary work in providing a prognosis for the problem of why the Marxist script failed to unfold and he located sites of potential radical social change. What was less transparent, however, was the *means* by which we move from here (capitalism) to his Utopian vision of the future. By negating the structures of the current milieu, he was able to postulate a replacement for technical rationality with an aesthetic dimension, of surplus repression with technology's deployment towards the termination of scarcity, and so forth, but never did he quite concretize a robust method by which to undermine the stagnation of the current milieu and get progress up and moving once more. Peirce's entire method of inquiry, however, was aimed at undermining precisely this sort of stagnation and getting us all back on the long run of inquiry. By applying

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<sup>1826</sup> Brent, *Charles S. Peirce: A Life, Op. Cit.*, 53. Further, as Sebeok notes, *Spieltrieb* was an "aesthetic tendency, mediating and harmoniously reconciling the twofold way of sense and reason on the level of the individual faculties (microcosmos, the particular) as well as those of society (macrocosmos, the lofty)," Thomas Sebeok, *The Play of Musement* (Bloomington: Indianapolis University Press, 1981), 1.

Peirce's method, complete with his critique of the method of authority, I maintain it is possible to supply Marcuse with the method by which to help bring about an end to the stagnation and indoctrination of commodity capitalism. That said, there must be one, crucial caveat: Marcuse would have to abandon, to no small degree, what few specific details he maintained about the look and feel of this new society.

For precisely the same reason Peirce would never permit his philosophy to be placed in service to even the most benevolent political ends, should Marcuse prescribe specific ideals, values, and structures for his Utopia-to-be, it is hard to see how this would amount to anything other than a *new* manifestation of the method of authority. Marcuse would have to be open to the possibility that whatever social coordination comes next, should the current, stifling milieu dissolve, it would be the creation *of* the inquirers who compose it, freely, autonomously, and to whatever ends their investigations take them. Now, in no way does this undermine Marcuse's critical project, however: if he deployed a Peircean model, it would necessarily strive to dissolve any blockade of inquiry (as per Peirce's first rule of reason) which, as we've seen, would include segregation, discrimination, and the ingression of capitalistic values into realms of education and inquiry. Marcuse and Peirce could work hand-in-hand on the *negative* side of the coin in dissolving the barricades of free inquiry that the one-dimensional society has established. The *positive* side of the coin, that which comes *next*, must by contrast necessary be a bit hazy and indeterminate. Though one can hazard a *guess* as to what form such a social coordination would take, the details of it must, necessarily, remain inconclusive as inquiries that have yet to unfold and answers that must still be sought.



Such a command for suspended indeterminacy does not, however, increase the risk that the *next* coordination will be worse than the current milieu, as Marcuse had feared. Although Peirce never prescribed specific beliefs, ideals, or virtues *a priori*, his prescribed *method*, the *only* method that has any chance of attaining Truth in the long run, the only method that won't succumb to cataclysmic doubt or perpetual stagnation, was a necessarily democratic method. Democracy simply could not dissolve into tyranny if Peirce's method were deployed honestly, authentically, and by a sufficiently large number of participants precisely because it is, itself; (a) fallible (*all* beliefs are only provisionally true and contingency and the readiness to abandon them are ever present, concepts that are not hallmarks of a tyrannical regime whose efficacy lies precisely in their pawning off their contingent, constructing beliefs *as* timeless and necessary); (b) hyperbolically inclusive (adhering to his realism, that society is an organism of which we are but cells that comprise it, no exclusion is possible and thus no single individual, or group of individuals, could attain such power as to drown out the voices of the people); and (c) dissolves *all* blockades of inquiry according to Peirce's first rule of reason (there would be no place for discrimination of any kind and a critical eye would be ever-turned towards would-be authoritarians who would block inquiry's unfolding). If the milieu of the authority, that is, the one-dimensional society, is an impediment to radical autonomy, then it follows for Marcuse that "Utopia...becomes a legitimate object of inquiry"<sup>1827</sup> to which end Peirce provides the method. And there *is* some hint of a Utopian vision in Peirce's pragmatism, nascent, evanescent, and indeterminate as it may be, if an unlimited community of inquirers is ultimately "destined" to find Truth, that destiny can be fulfilled

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<sup>1827</sup> Stephen Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 240.

only if a hyperbolically inclusive, radically critical form of inquiry is allowed to unfold in a profoundly democratic socio-political structure.

Conversely, when we look through the myriad passages where Peirce leveled a scathing critique against this authority, coupled with the ways in which capitalism seems to have altered or stagnated the trajectory of inquiry, there's a hint of mystery in his tone, of curiosity as to what, precisely, is the driving force behind this stagnation. Peirce sited "Greed" as the culprit, that is, those that adhere to the "Gospel of Greed," and extrapolated out that it is some motivation along these lines that brings about often massively long epochs under authoritarian rule. That such societies *did* exist, and that such societies *do still* exist, of this Peirce was quite certain. But *how* did they come to indoctrinate so many, leaving social progress in the hands of those scant few with "wider social feeling," remains a bit of an enigma, for Peirce, or at least, nothing he ever commented on explicitly. Who better to fill in this gap than Marcuse? If we were to insert *One-Dimensional Man* squarely into Peirce's critique of authority in "The Fixation of Belief," not only would the two critiques be easily enmeshed but, too, it would provide a clear and exhaustive exploration of *how* the authority manages to maintain its dominance for so long over so many (at least as it applies to the advanced industrial society). Marcuse's scathing critique of the indoctrinating mechanisms of commodity capitalism would shed new light on the method of authority's efficacy and illuminate, with shocking specificity, sites of blockages to inquiry and provide those individuals of "wider social feeling" with innumerable new tools at the ready for their critique. Indeed, I would argue Marcuse, himself, could have *been* one of these Peircean individuals. In sum, Peirce

offers us a *positive* theory of belief formation while concurrently offering us a nascent *critical* theory of all impediments to autonomous, communal progress towards Truth.

As such, Peirce's nascent critical theory is, as I've explored, compatible with Marcuse's own in a variety of ways. Just as "Marcuse discovered a radical kernel – the dialectical theory of negativity – and spent the rest of his life making use of this approach in an attempt to analyze and criticize existing ideologies and social institutions,"<sup>1828</sup> Peirce's own critique of the method of authority utilized a dialectical theory of negativity to analyze and criticize the existing social institutions that would seek to dictate beliefs *for* a populace rather than allowing inquiry to unfold freely:

These men possess a wider sort of social feeling; they see that men in other countries and in other ages have held to very different doctrines from those which they themselves have been brought up to believe; and they cannot help seeing that it is the mere accident of their having been taught as they have, and of their having been surrounded with the manners and associations they have, that has caused them to believe as they do and not far differently...thus giving rise to doubts in their minds.<sup>1829</sup>

The false sense of *necessity* is dissolved by bringing the current milieu into stark contrast with socio-political coordinations elsewhere, illuminating the obfuscated *contingency* by, as Marcuse might say, negating these "existing forms of thought and reality from the perspective of higher possibilities."<sup>1830</sup>

As Marcuse lamented:

The mass democracy developed by monopoly capitalism has shaped the rights and liberties which it grants in its own image and interest; the majority of the people is the majority of their masters; deviations are easily 'contained'; and concentrated power can afford to tolerate (perhaps

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<sup>1828</sup> Robert Pippin, Andrew Feenberg, Charles P. Webel, *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia* (Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1998), x.

<sup>1829</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.381.

<sup>1830</sup> Douglas Kellner, introduction to Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), xiv.

even defend) radical dissent as long as the latter complies with the established rules and manners...the opposition is thus sucked into the very world which it opposes.<sup>1831</sup>

Just as Peirce lamented:

Let the will of the state act, then, instead of the individual. Let an institution be created which shall have for its object to keep correct doctrines before the attention of the people, to reiterate them perpetually, and to teach them to the young; having at the same time power to prevent contrary doctrines from being taught, advocated, or expressed.<sup>1832</sup>

All of the methods of Marcuse's "counterrevolution" are in full bloom in Peirce's authority: the people are "kept ignorant, lest they should learn of some reason to think otherwise than they do" and "their passions be enlisted, so that they may regard private and unusual opinions with hatred and horror" such that "all men who reject the established belief be terrified into silence."<sup>1833</sup> Consider the synchronicity with Marcuse's critique of the Third Reich, a paradigmatic example of a Peircean authority:

In National Socialist Germany, the reign of terror is sustained...by the ingenious manipulation of the power inherent in technology: the intensification of labor, propaganda, the training of youths and workers, the organization of the governmental, industrial and party bureaucracy—all of which constitute the daily implements of terror—follow the lines of greatest technological efficiency.<sup>1834</sup>

The individuals who would try to undermine the authority were, for Marcuse, labeled "deviant," "enemy," words whose "meaning is defined and validated by the actions of the Enemy regardless of their motivation and goal."<sup>1835</sup> Such deviations are easily contained,

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<sup>1831</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 64.

<sup>1832</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.379.

<sup>1833</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1834</sup> Herbert Marcuse, "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology," in *Collected Papers*, vol. 1, *Technology, War and Fascism*, ed. Douglas Kellner (Routledge, New York: 1998), 41 – 42.

<sup>1835</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation, Op. Cit.*, 64.

as Marcuse said, but “as long as the social system reproduces, by indoctrination and integration, a self-perpetuating conservative majority, the majority reproduces the system itself – open to changes within, but not beyond, its institutional framework,” just as Peirce noted that:

No institution can undertake to regulate opinions upon every subject. Only the most important ones can be attended to, and on the rest men’s minds must be left to the action of natural causes. This imperfection will be no source of weakness so long as men are in such a state of culture that one opinion does not influence another – that is, so long as they cannot put two and two together.<sup>1836</sup>

Thus, as Marcuse said:

The struggle for changes beyond the system becomes, by virtue of its own dynamic, undemocratic in the terms of the system, and counterviolence is from the beginning inherent in this dynamic. Thus the radical is guilty – either of surrendering to the power of the *status quo*, or of violating the Law and Order of the *status quo*.<sup>1837</sup>

The “radical,” the individual with wider social feeling, seeks not to make minute alterations within the system of authority (alterations acceptable by the status quo so long as the more fundamental principles that perpetuate the authority’s power remain intact), but to undermine it entirely, risking becoming a part of the “general massacre of all who have not thought in a certain way.”<sup>1838</sup> As Marcuse said, “they are contagious...and threaten the clean, anesthetized, healthy free world. They must be liquidated, smoked out, and burned out like venom.”<sup>1839</sup> The Peircean radical is an adherent of the scientific method, true, but also an adherent of a democratic way of life that is requisite for this individual’s method to flourish at all. Further, the Peircean radical is a historian and

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<sup>1836</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.381.

<sup>1837</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 69 – 70.

<sup>1838</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.379.

<sup>1839</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 76.

semiotician, those that “study the past to find out what happened and what it meant, using the plethora of signs that was left behind. In studying the past”<sup>1840</sup> we negate the necessity of the indoctrinating milieu of the present, making it contingent once more, coming to the realization that it was “mere accident of their having been taught as they have, and of their having been surrounded with the manners and associations they have, that has caused them to believe as they do and not far differently.”<sup>1841</sup> This negation of necessity is the dissolution of a blockade of inquiry, the creation of a “constructive tension,” in the words of King, requisite for intellectual growth. These critical theorists, these individuals of wider social feelings, are the “gadflies” of their day, and like King and Socrates, as both Marcuse and Peirce warn, they are the primary targets of the authority’s counterrevolution.

Such a Peircean-Marcusean fusion philosophy would have to find a way to reconcile Marcuse’s language of “instinct” and “need” with Peirce’s language of “belief” and “habit.” I see no insurmountable difficulty here, however. In fact, precisely because Marcuse took so much of Freud’s language of instinct and repression at face value, he thus opened himself, indirectly, to all of the criticisms leveled against Freud by his detractors. It is possible to retain the core of Marcuse’s insights while shifting the language frame from one of instincts and needs to one of beliefs and habits through a Peircean lens.

Consider Marcuse’s concern that we seek an “idea” purified from the “mutilated experience which is the work of society” wherein it is “given” in a “false” and “distorted”

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<sup>1840</sup> Joseph Brent, “Pursuing Peirce,” in “The Philosophy of C.S. Peirce,” special issue, *Synthese* 106, no. 3, (March 1996): 301 – 322, 303.

<sup>1841</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.381.

form.<sup>1842</sup> This is job of “negative” thinking that “negates”<sup>1843</sup> the false by exposing the contingency of that *belief* by bringing it into constructive tension with an alternative belief (precisely as Peirce prescribed). Although Marcuse was wary that science worked hand-in-hand with technology to *further* alienation and indoctrination into the status quo, for Peirce the scientific *method*, which is neither the sole province of scientists, *scientism*, nor science-for-the-sake-of-science, is the method by which such constructive tension can be forged. “Reality has to be discovered and projected,”<sup>1844</sup> Marcuse noted, “projected” in so far as it is postulated as existing *beyond* or *behind* the stultifying confines of capital’s discourse and commodity fetishism, and thus “discovered” via negative thinking that which *is not* the false, artificial ideology of exploitation and toil which has, at least, the potential to be what really *is*. “The senses must learn not to see things anymore in the medium of that law and order which has formed them; the bad functionalism which organizes our sensibility must be smashed.”<sup>1845</sup> Peirce was critical of *naïve* empiricism and was no instrumentalist. “Reality,” which is comparable with Truth as the ultimate opinion destined to one day be reached, is *not* the “reality” or “truth” of the here-and-now, at least, not necessarily, and the scientific method, deployed earnestly, will bring about any tension that exists between a lack of “correspondence” between the truths of the present and the Truth awaiting us at the end of the long run. Peirce “projected” reality insofar as it was a goal not-yet-achieved, but a goal of the *future* and, as such, is ever in tension with the “reality” as it is experienced sensibly in the present. As Marcuse noted:

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<sup>1842</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 70.

<sup>1843</sup> Negative thinking presents ideas as “the *horizon* of experience under which the immediately given forms of things appear as ‘negative,’ as denial of their inherent possibilities, their truth,” *Ibid*.

<sup>1844</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 39.

<sup>1845</sup> *Ibid*.

Knowledge is transcendent (toward the object world, toward reality) not only in an epistemological sense – as against repressive forms of life – it is political. Denial of the right to political activity in the university perpetuates the separation between theoretical and practical reason and reduces the effectiveness and the scope of intelligence.<sup>1846</sup>

As with Peirce, knowledge claims in the *present* are always only provisional and knowledge proper is *transcendent* towards Truth at the end of the long run. “Denial of the right to political activity,” especially in the university, was precisely the sort of blockage that Peirce sought to dissolve since its result was the reduction of the effectiveness and scope of intelligence: it limits our exposure to the alternative beliefs require for inquiry’s progression, i.e., it negates the potential for negative thinking. As Feenberg notes, for Marcuse, “to be obstinate means to reject the easy reconciliation with society, to keep *a sense of reality* based on longer time spans, deeper tensions, higher expectations and goals.”<sup>1847</sup> Peirce’s “long run” provides the perspective of this “longer time span,” creating a perpetual “tension” (for those adherents of the method) between any provisional belief in the here and now and the Truth at the (hypothetical) end of inquiry’s trajectory.<sup>1848</sup>

Marcuse gave us clues, intermittently, as to how we can bridge the divide between the language of instinct and need and the Peircean language of belief and habit. Consider the following:

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<sup>1846</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>1847</sup> Andrew Feenburg, “The Critique of Technology: From Dystopia to Interaction,” in *Marcuse: From the New Left to the Next Left*, ed. John Bokina and Timothy J. Lukes (Kansas City: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 208.

<sup>1848</sup> Marcuse “was not merely complaining about a system he didn’t like. He was imagining how it will appear to a backward glance rooted in the wider context of values evolved over past centuries and destined to achieve realization in the very technology of a future society. The obsolescence of the present system will be obvious in this hypothetical future, justifying the obstinacy of those who persisted in critique through these critical times,” *Ibid.*, 209.



Once a specific morality is firmly established as a norm of social behavior, it is not only introjected – it also operates as a norm of ‘organic’ behavior: the organism receives and reacts to stimuli and ‘ignores’ or repels others in accord with the introjected morality, which is thus promoting or impeding the function of the organism as a living cell in the respective society.<sup>1849</sup>

This language could as easily been culled from Peirce as from Marcuse. For Peirce, beliefs are “introjected” by the authority and manifest as habits of conduct within that milieu. Peirce’s organicism, that is, belief formation via the transaction of organism and (social) environment, operated in precisely this manner. The authority engages in a very Marcusean “artificial desublimation” wherein alternative doctrines are either repelled or reduced the terms of the system of control, reifying it further. This impedes the function of the organism (a “living cell” precisely as Peirce, himself, described the individual organism within the mega-organism of society) as a free participant in inquiry.

As Marcuse said, “it is precisely this excessive adaptability of the human organism which propels the perpetuation and extension of the commodity form and, with it, the perpetuation and extension of the social controls over behavior and satisfaction.”<sup>1850</sup> Here the core of Marcuse’s project is distilled concisely and framed in the Peircean language of adaptation and belief formation. Human beings are habit-forming, belief-forming creatures within the frame of organism-environment transaction. The terms of that social environment are set by the authority<sup>1851</sup> and thus the organism, simply living out its adaptive nature, conforms to the beliefs and mores of that

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<sup>1849</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 11.

<sup>1850</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>1851</sup> “They can emerge only in the collective *practice of creating an environment*: level by level, step by step – in the material and intellectual production, an environment in which the nonaggressive, erotic, receptive faculties of man, in harmony with the consciousness of freedom, strive for the pacification of man and nature,” Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Op. Cit.*, 31.

environment in order to survive and, ideally, in order to flourish. This *is* the “performance principle” (in the language of *Eros and Civilization*) and the proliferation of “false needs” (in the language of *One-Dimensional Man*) as the key facet of that “social control” over behavior and their fulfillment provides the “satisfaction” that perpetuates the “drugged stupor” of acquiescence and reifies the status quo.

The charge that Peirce was a mere instrumentalist was based, I argue, on the assumption that adaptation into *any* milieu was the sole purpose of rational thought, that so long as beliefs “cashed out” they were true and valid. As Marcuse lamented:

The individual’s performance is motivated, guided and measured by standards external to him, standards pertaining to predetermined tasks and functions. The efficient individual is the one whose performance is an action only insofar as it is the proper reaction to the objective requirements of the apparatus, and his liberty is confined to the selection of the most adequate means for reaching a goal which he did not set.<sup>1852</sup>

But Peirce’s critique of the method of authority was testament to his awareness that there is *more* to reason than mere adaptation: reason’s proper deployment is towards the Truth which necessarily transcends *any* socio-political coordination and true beliefs are not reducible to what is proliferated by a power majority. As Marcuse said, “society...demands to a considerable extent...belief in the operative value of society’s values.”<sup>1853</sup> That *is* the mechanism of indoctrination of the method of authority put as succinctly as anywhere in Peirce. But *authentic* adaptation, human flourishing, in a sense, can take place only within a socio-political system where inquiry unfolds *freely*, without

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<sup>1852</sup> Herbert Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” in *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, vol. 1, *Technology, War and Fascism*, ed. Douglas Kellner (New York: Routledge, 1998), 45.

<sup>1853</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 84. Further, “business, technics, human needs and nature are welded together into one rational and expedient mechanism. He will fare best who follows its directions, subordinating his spontaneity to the anonymous wisdom which ordered everything for him,” Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” *Op. Cit.*, 46.

barricade and without external influence, *especially* from an authoritarian system of control. Marcuse's concerns here echo Peirce's own with outstanding synchronicity and, like Marcuse's conception of "negative thinking" as the cognitive ability to militate against such passive acceptance of needs implanted and instincts repressed, Peirce's "method of inquiry" achieves *precisely* the same ends.

This distinction between adaptation with a free society and adaptation within the method of authority was central to both Peirce and Marcuse. As Marcuse noted, for example, in discussing what the "new relationships" between individuals within a radically different, post-capitalist society might look like:

These new relationships would be the result of a 'biological'<sup>1854</sup> *solidarity* in work and purpose, expressive of a true harmony between social and individual needs and goals, between recognized necessity and free development – the exact opposite of the administered and enforced harmony organized in the advanced capitalist (and socialist?) countries...solidarity and cooperation: not all their forms are liberating. Fascism and militarism have developed a deadly efficient solidarity. Socialist solidarity is autonomy: self-determination begins at home – and that is with every I, and the We whom the I chooses.<sup>1855</sup>

Because of Peirce's realism<sup>1856</sup> (and aversion to nominalism<sup>1857</sup>), he saw a fundamental "solidarity" between all "cells" within the greater organism of society. This authentic

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<sup>1854</sup> Marcuse qualified his use of the term "biological" in a footnote, noting: "I use the terms 'biological' and 'biology' not in the sense of the scientific discipline, but in order to designate the process and the dimension in which inclinations, behavior patterns, and aspirations become vital needs which, if not satisfied, would cause dysfunction of the organism. Conversely, socially induced needs and aspirations may result in a more pleasurable organic behavior. If biological needs are defined as those which must be satisfied and for which no adequate substitute can be provided, certain cultural needs can 'sink down' into the biology of man. We could then speak, for example, of the biological need of freedom, or of some aesthetic needs as having taken root in the organic structure of man, in his 'nature,' or rather 'second nature.' This usage of the term 'biological' does not imply or assume anything as to the way in which needs are physiologically expressed and transmitted," Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation, Op. Cit.*, Footnote 1, 10.

<sup>1855</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>1856</sup> Peirce's correspondence with St. Louis Hegelian William Torrey Harris resulted in Peirce's "examination of the matter" (of realism vs. nominalism) and Peirce came to recognize that "generals, such as the laws of science, are real," Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life, Op. Cit.*, 72.

solidarity is brought about “from every individual merging his individuality in sympathy with his neighbours.”<sup>1858</sup> This sentiment can thrive only in a society under the aegis of the method of free inquiry and is juxtaposed with the *faux* “solidarity” forged of the mass mentality under the method of authority. There is, indeed, a solidarity under authority, one of indoctrination and passive acceptance of proliferated beliefs creating a legion of “intellectual slaves”<sup>1859</sup> like “the oarsmen, who cannot speak to one another, are each of them yoked in the same rhythm as the modern worker in the factory, movie theater, and collective,”<sup>1860</sup> as Horkheimer and Adorno would say and in Marcuse’s words here, an “administered and enforced harmony organized” in the advanced industrial society. Society, for Marcuse...

...is, to be sure, composed of individuals—but of individuals who cease to be isolated, who cease thinking. The isolated individual within the crowd cannot help thinking, criticizing the emotions. The others, on the other hand, cease to think: they are moved, they are carried away, they are elated; they feel united with their fellow members in the crowd, released from all inhibitions; they are changed and feel no connection with their former state of mind.<sup>1861</sup>

As such, Peirce *was* a social individualist through and through, but not a naïve one, as instanced in celebration of those critical theorists of wider social feeling that can *transcend* the indoctrinating milieu: unique and “atomic” in their revolutionary attitude

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<sup>1857</sup> Peirce was critical of “the pluralism of nominalism with its discrete units, a view that he counters with his emphasis on continuity or synechism,” forwarding “his own unique pluralism that attacks ‘the pluralism of nominalism,’” Rosenthal, *Peirce’s Pluralism, Op. Cit.*, ix. Further, as Peirce says, “1<sup>st</sup>, that all the intelligible philosophers, even Hegel, have been more or less nominalistic; 2<sup>nd</sup>, that nominalism is false in all its shades and degrees; and 3<sup>rd</sup>, that it has had a baleful influence upon civilization,” cited in Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life, Op. Cit.*, 71.

<sup>1858</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.294.

<sup>1859</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.381.

<sup>1860</sup> Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, “The Concept of Enlightenment,” in *Critical Theory: The Essential Readings*, ed. David Ingram (New York: Paragon House, 1998), 55.

<sup>1861</sup> E. Lederer, *State of the Masses* (New York, 1940), 32f. cited in Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” *Op. Cit.*, 53.

seeking the authentic solidarity “of autonomy,” in Marcuse’s words, under a more egalitarian socio-political system.

Though Marcuse championed individualism, it was the individualism of the Peircean individuals of “wider social feeling”: “the bourgeois individual is not overcome by simply refusing social performance, by dropping out and living one’s own style of life. To be sure, no revolution without individual liberation, but also no individual liberation without the liberation of society.”<sup>1862</sup> This “*dialectic of liberation*”<sup>1863</sup> entails that the “individual liberation (refusal) must incorporate the *universal* in particular protest, and the images and values of a future free society must appear in the personal relationships within the unfree society.”<sup>1864</sup> Within a society freed from the indoctrinating mores of commodity capitalism, “individualism” would take on a radically different connotation, for Marcuse. But within the frame of his critical theory, in his critique of *this* milieu, “individualism” of a social variety amounts to little more than the pacified, intellectual “slaves” of Peirce’s method of authority. Neither Peirce *nor* Marcuse championed that form of “social individualism.” But *within* that milieu, conditionally, a kind of “atomic” individualism is championed that highlights those critical theorists, those negative thinkers, those individuals of wider social feeling, to rise above the stultifying mores of the authority precisely *by* separating themselves *from* their neighbors if their neighbors have been reduced to little more than heteronomous automatons under the Establishment. Not to *abandon* them, however, but to help liberate them: like the enlightened soul returning to the cave, Peirce’s individual of wider social feeling could not bring about an end to the method of authority (which must be the individual’s goal for without the

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<sup>1862</sup> Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *Op. Cit.*, 49

<sup>1863</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1864</sup> *Ibid.*

dissolution of authority there is no socio-political framework within which a method of inquiry could flourish) without likewise “freeing” individuals and dissolving the efficacy of the authority. This is precisely why Marcuse called for an “individual liberation (refusal)” that “must incorporate the *universal* in particular protest”: it is not enough for a few, select individuals to bask in the glow of freedom from authority for that freedom would be all too short-lived if a *new* socio-political coordination wasn’t formed to provide the bedrock of freedom for inquiry to unfold uncoerced and autonomously. For as Bronner notes, one of Marcuse’s central concerns throughout his career was the “rendering of critical theory capable of building solidarity and informing radical practice.”<sup>1865</sup>

Douglas Kellner defines “a critical theory of society” as “a project underway; it is always partial, historical, and subject to revision.”<sup>1866</sup> Explicit in Peirce’s method of inquiry are two, vital components: fallibilism and his first rule of reason which demands we dissolve any blockade to further inquiry. For Peirce, no inquiry “is exempt from revision and correction”<sup>1867</sup> and that every belief “is subject to revision on the basis of new discoveries.”<sup>1868</sup> It is “historical” in so far as our beliefs are forged from the fires of inquiries past as the unlimited community of inquirers is not only an ideal coordination in some nebulous future but is *already* in progress, stretching across nations and stretching back through time. And it is “partial,” not yet complete (perhaps only ideally *ever* complete), as the long run continues to stretch out before us. As Rockmore notes, “for

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<sup>1865</sup> Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, *Op. Cit.*, 237.

<sup>1866</sup> Douglas Kellner “Introduction: Herbert Marcuse and the Vicissitudes of Critical Theory,” in *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, vol. 2, *Towards a Critical Theory of Society*, ed. Douglas Kellner (New York: Routledge, 2001), 32.

<sup>1867</sup> Ernest Nagel, “Charles S. Peirce, Pioneer of Modern Empiricism,” *Philosophy of Science* 7, no. 1, (1940): 69 – 80, 78.

<sup>1868</sup> Umberto Eco, *Serendipities* (New York: Mariner Books, 1999), 3.

Peirce, knowledge is the result of an ongoing process that has neither an absolute beginning nor an absolute end, that is always subject to rational criticism, whose results are hence always provisional.”<sup>1869</sup> For as Peirce said, “there is nothing...to prevent our knowing outward things as they really are, and it is most likely that we do thus know them in numberless cases, although we can never be absolutely certain of doing so in any special case.”<sup>1870</sup>

It is this appreciation of the partiality of our knowledge (not a *lack* of knowledge that amounts to skepticism, but a fallibilism that never claims to know what one does not know, as per Socrates’ famous dictum) that gave Peirce a persistent air of negative thinking in his method: we must always be ready to challenge our beliefs (especially the beliefs that flow from some source of authority). As Peirce said:

Ideas under the designation *fallibilism*; and indeed the first step toward *finding out* is to acknowledge you do not satisfactorily know already; so that no blight can so surely arrest all intellectual growth as the blight of cocksureness; and ninety-nine out of every hundred good heads are reduced to impotence by that malady – of whose inroads they are most strangely unaware!<sup>1871</sup>

For Marcuse, as Schoolman says:

To think negatively, or dialectically, is to conceive of things as they appear as being limited. Such conceptions spring from a recognition of something’s potentiality. To think in this manner is to deny, cancel, or ‘negate’ a thing’s apparent form. And to think negatively, critically, there must be freedom of thought. Rational faculties must be free from any sort of conditioning by social and political factors that would blind reasoning processes to the existence of possibilities for growth and development.<sup>1872</sup>

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<sup>1869</sup> Tom Rockmore, “Hegel, Peirce and Knowledge,” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, New Series, 13, no. 1 (1999): 166 – 184, 174.

<sup>1870</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.311.

<sup>1871</sup> *Ibid.*, CP 1.13.

<sup>1872</sup> Morton Schoolman, *The Imaginary Witness: The Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse* (New York: The Free Press, 1980), 75.

Peirce maintained that he has always stood for, “the very freest of free-thinking. If there is anyone who goes beyond me in reprobation of all attempts and any attempt to stifle or discourage free-thought or its proper expression all I can say is that I have never yet met such a person.”<sup>1873</sup> The entirety of Peirce’s critique of the method of authority *was*, as Schoolman notes as *central* to Marcuse’s own project, to *free* the “rational faculties...from any sort of conditioning by social and political factors that would blind reasoning processes to the existence of possibilities for growth and development.” By postulating the attainment of Truth as a goal *not yet achieved*, Peirce wove negative thinking into the very fibers of the method of inquiry that propels inquiry into the future.

As Peirce said:

The doctrine of fallibilism will also be denied by those who fear its consequence for science, for religion, and for morality. But I will take leave to say to these highly conservative gentlemen that however competent they may be to direct the affairs of a church or other corporations, they had better not try to manage science in that way. Conservatism...is altogether out of place in science – which has on the contrary always been forwarded by radicals and radicalism...not the radicalism that is cocksure, however, but the *radicalism that tries experiments*.<sup>1874</sup>

The experimentalism of his method *assumes* from the start that there is some *need* for experimentation, that our knowledge is as yet still “partial,” and thus flies in the face of the “conservatism” that would see stagnation instead of progress and recede into the safety of one’s tenaciously held beliefs like so much ostrich sinking its head into the sands.

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<sup>1873</sup> Charles S. Peirce in Richard Robin, *Annotated Catalogue of the Papers of Charles S. Peirce* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967), L387b.

<sup>1874</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.148.



Peirce often called a facet of his pragmatism “critical common-sensism.” *Not* the “common sensism” of positivism, but a *critical* form uniquely situated in *opposition* to such bare claims. Peirce, as we’ve seen, railed against positivism as viscerally as Marcuse, who lamented that:

Positivism, the philosophy of common sense, appeals to the certainty of facts, but, as Hegel shows, in a world where facts do not at all present what reality can and ought to be, positivism amounts to giving up the real potentialities of mankind for a false and alien world. The positivist attack on universal concepts, on the ground they cannot be reduced to observable facts, cancels from the domain of knowledge everything that may not yet be a fact...when [Hegel] emphasizes time and again that the universal is pre-eminent over the particular, he is struggling against limiting truth to the particular ‘given.’ The universal is more than the particular. This signifies in the concrete that the potentialities of men and things are not exhausted in the given forms and relations in which they actually appears; it means that men and things are all they have been and actually are, and yet more than all this. Setting the truth in the universal expressed in Hegel’s conviction that no given particular form, whether in nature or society, embodies the whole truth.<sup>1875</sup>

Time and again pragmatism has been accused of being little more than a kind of self-deluded form of positivism, the heart of both Horkheimer’s and Habermas’ critiques as I discussed. To what degree that may be true of Dewey and James who, as some scholars note, never quite rid themselves of a certain gnawing nominalism and subjectivism, I hope I have exhaustively demonstrated that Peirce was *neither* a nominalist *nor* a subjectivist in *any* sense of those terms. Peirce made a clear distinction between “practices” and “ethics,” quite possibly inspired by Peirce’s reading of Kant. Scholars like Gava, inspired by Apel’s Kantian reading of Peirce, highlight Peirce’s adaptation of

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<sup>1875</sup> Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution, Op. Cit.*, 113 – 114. However, one must likewise be conscious of the tyranny of the universal whereby the givenness of things is ignored. For this reason, Peirce’s triadic method of inquiry might be quite a boon for those wishing to circumnavigate the Scylla and Charybdis of the tyranny of the particular and the tyranny of the universal by highlighting the integral place of *both* in inquiry: the immediacy of Firstness and the generality of Thirdness.

the Kantian distinction between “purposefulness and purposiveness” that “turn out to be primarily regulative principles of our thought.”<sup>1876</sup> The distinction between “purposefulness” and “purposiveness” mirrors the distinction between “practices” and “ethics” as Peirce presented them. Indeed, the very name “pragmatism” is a testament to Peirce’s close reading of Kant:

For this doctrine he invented the name *pragmatism*. Some of his friends wished him to call it *practicism* or *practicalism* (perhaps on the ground that {praktikos} is better Greek than {pragmatikos}). But for one who had learned philosophy out of Kant, as the writer, along with nineteen out of every twenty experimentalists who have turned to philosophy, had done, and who still thought in Kantian terms most readily, *praktisch* and *pragmatisch* were as far apart as the two poles, the former belonging in a region of thought where no mind of the experimentalist type can ever make sure of solid ground under his feet, the latter expressing relation to some definite human purpose. Now quite the most striking feature of the new theory was its recognition of an inseparable connection between rational cognition and rational purpose; and that consideration it was which determined the preference for the name *pragmatism*.<sup>1877</sup>

The coordination of “practices” and “ethics” (“purposiveness” and “purposefulness”) was central to Peirce’s doctrine precisely because Peirce was *not* merely advocating a philosophy of wholly practical and subjective concerns, but establishing the groundwork for how knowledge acquisition was possible at all. The growth of knowledge (the progress of thought and science) depends on the ascertaining of both ends *and* means: ethics orients us towards an end just as practices helps us conform our actions *to* that end.

As Bernstein notes in his exploration of Marcuse:

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<sup>1876</sup> Gabriele Gava, “The Purposefulness of Our Thought: A Kantian Aid to Understanding Some Essential Features of Peirce.” In “A Symposium on James Good’s ‘A Search for Unity in Diversity,’” special issue, *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 44, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 699 – 727, 699.

<sup>1877</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 5.412.

The battle between negativity and positivity is the most consequential and decisive battle in the contemporary world. It is not only a battle that takes place between competing philosophical or intellectual orientations. We are threatened with the triumph of positivity which infects every aspect of culture and social reality, a positivity that reflects a basic impotence in the face of what is given, what appears as existing historical social fact. Everything Marcuse *said* and *did* was motivated by the basic desire to expose and combat the invidious consequences of positivity.<sup>1878</sup>

For Peirce, there is no impotence in the face of what is given because, in part, he rejected any form of passive “spectator” theory of organism-environment transaction. Further, what is presented in phenomenological experience is only the basis of a provisional belief which is ever-pitted against a Truth still unfulfilled at the end of the long run. Negativity is implicit in every facet of a method of inquiry that is necessarily fallible and whose results are always only provisional.

Positivism, as well as a naïve sort of instrumentalism, is a way of thinking that “identifies truth with what exists” and “disdains any attempt to investigate possible alternatives to the established reality or the means by which these possibilities might be realized, denigrates reason to the level of mere manipulation of facts, and refuses to judge established conditions in the light of already existing possibilities for transcending those conditions.”<sup>1879</sup> Peirce’s ethics, his purposefulness, his first rule of reason, all conspire to elevate his method of inquiry out of this naïve sort of positivism. His method is no “mere manipulation of facts. As Peirce said, “knowledge must involve *additions* to the facts observed. The making of those additions is an operation which we can control and it is

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<sup>1878</sup> Richard Bernstein, “Negativity: Theme and Variations,” in *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia* (Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc. 1998), 14. The “impotence” that Bernstein refers to here seems to be that of positivism’s inability to move *beyond* the “existing historical facts” to construct a viable critique, that is, positivism lacks the tools and resources within its basic frame to critique the frame that it works within.

<sup>1879</sup> William Leiss, John David Ober, and Erica Sherover, “Marcuse as Teacher,” in *The Critical Spirit: Essays in Honor of Herbert Marcuse*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff and Barrington Moore, Jr. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 422.

evidently a process during which error is liable to creep in” for, as Peirce maintained, “all our knowledge must be said to rest upon *observed facts*” but that “these observed facts relate exclusively to the particular circumstances that happened to exist when they were observed. They do not relate to any future occasions upon which we may be in doubt how we ought to act.”<sup>1880</sup>

As Marcuse said, “truth does not steadily and automatically grow out of the earlier state; it can be set free only by an *autonomous act* on the part of men”<sup>1881</sup> and, further, that “the realization of freedom and reason *requires the free rationality of those who achieve it.*”<sup>1882</sup> The autonomous act, the freedom to inquire, is precisely that which Peirce’s individuals of wider social feeling bring to their critique of the method of authority. Knowledge *can* progress steadily towards truth only once those obstacles are dissolved. There is no “steady” or “automatic” growth, for Peirce, but an ongoing struggle that necessitates the dissolution of forces that would block inquiry, as Marcuse would say, that present a “mutilated experience which is the work of society” wherein truth is presented in a “false” and “distorted” form.<sup>1883</sup>

Peirce’s actual scientific experience, his comprehensive grasp of the scientific enterprise, and his analysis of induction, led him to expect no specific guarantees of unfailing correctness, no royal road...but instead to understand that its power dwells in the capacity, through constant modification of its own conclusions, to approximate indefinitely to the truth.<sup>1884</sup>

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<sup>1880</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 6.522 - 524. It should be noted that this particular citation has the scent of instrumentalism about it as Peirce was referring to the ways in which we may *act* in the future. However, a charitable reading (and it can only be charitable as Peirce is unclear here) might be that, as Peirce noted in “Fixation of Belief,” a belief is a predisposition to act and, thus, perhaps he meant here only that such future occasions may arise to test and try our current beliefs (which are “true” *now* but that’s the extent to which they ever “cash out”).

<sup>1881</sup> Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, *Op. Cit.*, 315 (my italics).

<sup>1882</sup> *Ibid.*, *Op. Cit.*, 319 (my italics).

<sup>1883</sup> Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *Op. Cit.*, 70.

<sup>1884</sup> Justus Buchler, introduction to *Philosophical Writings of Peirce* (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), x.

It is an imaginative act, a creative deployment of our rational faculties not only to analyze what *is* but concurrently to postulate what *might otherwise be*, the very essence of Marcuse's negative thinking. As Peirce said, in the inquirer's "imagination" is "a sort of skeleton diagram, or outline sketch," and the inquirer "considers what modifications the hypothetical state of things would require to be made in that picture, and then examines it, that is *observes* what he has imagined" not of what "is" the case but of "what *would be*."<sup>1885</sup> As Smith notes, for Peirce "science requires a large dose of *feigned* doubt and hesitancy; it depends, in short, on running ahead of our genuine doubts, on making and tracing out the supposition that some former belief or theory *might* be mistaken and in asking 'theoretical' questions for the purpose of trying out the possibilities."<sup>1886</sup> There is no submission to authority or passive acquiescence to the status quo found anywhere in Peirce's method of inquiry but an active, purposeful problematizing of beliefs to see what we can do *better*. There is no mere shuffling around of bare facts but a concurrent postulation of alternative possibilities yet to be tried and tested. As Marcuse said:

As long as the social system reproduces, by indoctrination and integration, a self-perpetuating conservative majority, the majority reproduces the system itself – open to changes within, but not beyond, its institutional

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<sup>1885</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 2.227.

<sup>1886</sup> John E. Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 19. This problematizes Peirce's anti-Cartesianism. Although Peirce *was* advocating we allow our will to outpace our intellect (which Descartes warned *against* in the fourth meditation), nevertheless, the sort of *feigned doubt* that Smith highlights here sounds like precisely the sort of thing Peirce would critique *about* Descartes's method. The subtle distinction I would make is this: although Peirce criticized doubt for doubt's sake, *feigned* doubt (the active problematizing of experience where no doubt currently exists for a given belief) would be championed in terms of scientific innovation. But this would not be doubt for the sake of doubt, but doubt for the sake of innovation and innovation for the sake of approximating Truth. However, was this not *also* Descartes' project? Descartes was not a skeptic but was merely utilizing the method of doubt in order to ascertain apodictic certainty. In a sense, this was Peirce's project as well and the only *real* difference between Descartes and Peirce was that the former located certainty as a *foundation* and *beginning* of inquiry whereas the latter would postpone that adjudication indefinitely if needs be by placing it at the *end* of the long run of inquiry. Yet both, I maintain, appreciated and championed the integral role of doubt in inquiry.

framework. Consequently, the struggle for changes beyond the system becomes, by virtue of its own dynamic, undemocratic in the terms of the system, and counterviolence is from the beginning inherent in this dynamic. Thus the radical is guilty – either of surrendering to the power of the *status quo*, or of violating the Law and Order of the *status quo*.<sup>1887</sup>

If, as Kellner notes, the one-dimensional society “is for Marcuse a conservative formation resisting any attempt to negate the social whole in the name of radical transformation,”<sup>1888</sup> then why not find common ground with Peirce who said that “conservativism...is altogether out of place” in his method of inquiry, a method of inquiry “which has on the contrary always been forwarded by *radicals* and *radicalism*.”<sup>1889</sup> These “highly conservative gentlemen...however competent they may be to direct the affairs of a church or other corporations...had better not try to manage science in that way,” had better not block the path of inquiry by trying to impede an inquirer’s ability to freely investigate the world, for conservatives, those who, for Marcuse, are “reproducing the system” precisely by *stopping* such free experimentation that might undermine their proliferated beliefs by discovering truths counterproductive to their agenda. The “radical is guilty,”<sup>1890</sup> Marcuse said, of mounting a revolution against these conservative forces by rejecting their proliferated and mutilated beliefs and so why *not* appeal to a method, as Peirce said, “forwarded by radicals and radicalism...not the radicalism that is cocksure...but the *radicalism that tries experiments*”<sup>1891</sup>?

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<sup>1887</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.* 69 – 70.

<sup>1888</sup> Douglas Kellner, Tyson Lewis, and Clayton Pierce, *On Marcuse: Critique, Liberation, and Reschooling in the Radical Pedagogy of Herbert Marcuse* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2008), 10.

<sup>1889</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.148, my italics

<sup>1890</sup> Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, 69 – 70.

<sup>1891</sup> Peirce, *Op. Cit.*, CP 1.148, my italics on the “by,” Peirce’s italics on the rest.

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